

Great and Precious P R O M I S E S

O R,

Some Sermons concerning the Promises, and the right Application thereof:

Whereunto are added some other concerning the usefulness of Faith, in advancing Sanctification:

As also, three more concerning the Faith of Assurance.

By Mr. *ANDREW GRAY*, late Minister of the Gospel in *Glasgow*.

All being revised since his death by some friends. The last Impression carefully corrected and amended.

Cor. 7. 1. Having therefore these Promises (dearly beloved) let us cleanse our selves from all filthiness of the flesh and Spirit, perfecting Holiness in the Fear of GOD.

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To the Reader.

Christian Reader.

Although (upon some considerations) these following Sermons have been kept back till now, and have waited the vacancy of the Press from other things; yet was it at first intended (the connexion of the purposes so requiring) that they should have come forth as soon as some other of this precious Authors, which we did formerly publish: And therefore in the Preface which we then prefixed, we did relate to both, and give the Reader such advertisement as was conceived necessary concerning the one, as well as the other: So that we have nothing to do at present, but to put this little piece into thy hands, commending it to thy serious thoughts, and the Lords blessing upon them. Neither shall we use many words to this purpose: only we find some help is offered unto thee in three most weighty and concerning Points of Christian Religion. 1. How by the lively exercise of Faith, thou may apply the great and precious Promises. 2. How by Faith thou may advance the work of Sanctification. And 3. How thy Faith may grow up unto Assurance. Of all which we may truly say, that nothing can more seasonably take up the thoughts, nor bring more advantage to the Souls of the Lords People in these times.

O how necessary is it in such troublesome days, to learn how through Faith and Patience we may inherit the promises: and now when our strong corruption hath (in a manner) necessitated the wise Physician to mix unto us so bitter a Cup and give so strong a Potion, in what a fainting and swooning condition must we be, if by the two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lye, we receive not also the strong Consolation. Again when profanity and ungodliness hath so abounded in these Nations, that from the top of the head to the sole of the foot, there is no soundness, but wounds and bruises, and putrifying sores, And when the corruption of the time, like the Sons of Zeruah, are grown too strong even for the Davids who are amongst us; what should we study with more earnestness, than to purify your hearts by faith, and by having these promises, to cleanse our selves from all filthiness of the

to the Readers.
flesh and Spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord? 3. When the Lord hath removed us so far from peace, that the Souls of many have even forgot prosperity, and the multiplied changes and revolutions in our days, hath so clearly demonstrat the instableness of all sublunary glory, and so convincingly taught us, that this is not our rest, undoubtedly, it is a time to look for a City that hath foundations, and to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure, the subject then is usefull.

As to the manner of handling it; it is true, much accuracy and neatness is not to be expected in any work of this nature, being only the hasty gleanings of a Church Writer, and as to liveliness and power, though it be as easy to draw a picture with the hand and motion of a living man, as to write it point these lively motions of the spirit, which do often accompany the Lords messengers in preaching, and in an eminent measure were also let out upon this blessed Author; yet we suppose thou wilt find the matter most seriously and feelingly spoken unto, as from a heart which believed, and therefore spoke: Fear the conceptions and expressions favouring much of an exercised Spirit, not only much taken up in communion with God within it self, but even thirsting also and panting for the salvation of others; nay, (in some measure) travailling in birth till Christ might be formed in them. & that more of this holy zeal and fervency, might accompany this great measure of light and knowledge in the mysteries of the Gospel, that the Lord hath graciously bestowed both on Pastor and People in this generation, that once again we might see (as in the days of John Baptist) the Kingdom of Heaven suffering violence, and the violent taking it by force. And that the blessed Spirit by the same gracious operations, may so warm and enlarge thy soul in the use of this and a better means for thy eternal Salvation, &c. and shall be the sincere desire of,

Thy Servants for Christ's sake,

Robert Trail, John Stirling.

GREAT

Great and Precious PROMISES.

SERMON I.

Pet. 1:4. Whereby we given unto us exceeding great and precious Promises, that by these you might be Partakers of the Divine Nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

MAY we not truly say, that if ever the Christians who live in these days shall be advanced to stand within the holy place, and shall inherit everlasting Life, all these that are now before his Throne, may lay aside their Harps and give us leave to sing? Will it not be a Mystery, suppose ye, unto heavenly Enoch that spent so much of his time in communion and fellowship with God, when he shall behold such Christians within that everlasting Rest, that have spent so little of their time in corresponding with God? Will it not be a mystery unto believing Abraham, when he shall behold such misbelievers, such disputers of the Promises of GOD, advanced to reign with Christ? Will it not be a Mystery unto wrestling Jacob, when he shall behold these Christians once crowned with immortal glory, that did so little know what it was as Princes to wrestle with God, till they did prevail; Will it not be a wonder to patient Job, when he shall behold such impatient Christians as we have been, entering into that blessed place of repose? Will it not be a mystery unto holy David, when he shall behold such unmortified

fied Christians entering within that City, into which
 no unclean thing doth enter? Will it not be a myster-
 y unto tender *Josiah*, to behold such Christians as we
 are, that have our hearts dying as a stone within us,
 entering into Heaven? Will it not be a mystery unto
 upright *Nabonazel*, to behold such hypocritical Chri-
 stians, as the most part of us are, entering within the
 holy place, and to see those that have been clothed
 with hypocrisie and guile, now clothed with the
 robes of immortal glory and will it not be a mystery
 unto self-denied *Paul*, when he shall behold so proud
 and selfish Christians enter into Heaven? Give me
 leave to say this, go where we will; we shall be
 matchless and singular; for if we shall go into eternity
 of pain, we shall be the greatest debtors unto the in-
 finite Justice of God, in regard of mercies we have recei-
 ved: and if we shall enter into eternity of joy, we
 shall be the greatest debtors unto the spotless grace of
 Christ, in regard of mercy we have abused. There
 shall be none in Heaven like to us, and if we shall go
 to Hell, there shall be few there that may be compared
 unto us. And let me but add this further before I
 come to the words, go where we will, we shall be
 out of doubt with our condition: within a short time
 we shall be exalted above the reach of his misbelieving;
 a hypoerite shall be depressed below the reach of his
 faith, and one that is grossly in nature, he shall be
 abased beyond the reach of his presumption: a Christian
 ere long shall misbelieve no more, a hypoerite ere
 long shall believe no more; and one that is grossly in
 nature, shall ere long presume no more: there is no
 misbelief in Heaven, and there is no faith nor pre-
 sumption of well-being in Hell. But to come to that
 which we intend to speak to, we told you when we
 first began our discourse upon that precious and exalted
 Grace of Faith under a twofold notion and considera-
 tion. First, as it is justifying. And secondly, as
 it is sanctifying. For the first, we resolved to speak
 to it in a twofold consideration; First, As it closes

with Christ simply as the Object upon which it resteth, of this we have spoken from that place, 1 John 3.

Secondly, As it closeth with Christ, as is held forth in the Promises. And now being to speak of it in this consideration, we have made choice of this place, in which these things concerning the Promise, shortly follow. - 1. Ye have that Fountain and Spring from whence the Promises do flow, holden forth in the first Words of the verse, whereby, (or as the words may be more exactly rendered) *by whom* relating unto Jesus Christ, who is the Original and Spring of all Promises.

2. The properties of the Promises. and these are, 1. The freedom of the Promises, held forth in that word, *Given*; whereby *are given*, which speaketh this, that the promises are free gifts, flowing only from good pleasure. 2. Their unchangeableness, and that is holden forth in the word *Given*, the gifts and calling of God being without repentance. 3. That they are *exceeding great*, and the promises are called great, either in respect of that price that was laid down to purchase the promises; or they are called great in respect of the great things that are contained in them. 4. That they are *precious*; Now the promises are called precious, either in respect of their original, that they come from precious Christ; or else in respect of this, that they are the Object, (I mean the object *quo*, or by which) of precious Faith, as it is called in the first verse of this Chapter, or else they are precious, because they are things that a Christian ought to put an high account upon. For the word that is rendered *precious*, may likewise be rendered *honourable*, whereby *are given* unto us exceeding great and honourable Promises.

3. We have holden forth in the words, the great advantages of the Promises: *By them we are made partakers of the divine nature*. Now this is not to be understood of any essential conversion of our substance into the Substance of God, but of a Christian having the divine virtues of Jesus Christ impressed upon his Soul, and expressed in his life and conversation.

Great and precious promises.

And there is this lastly, concerning the promises in the words, even the time when the promises are eminently accomplished; it is, *when we have escaped, or as the word is, When we have fled from the corruptions that are in the World through lust?* That is the time when a Christian meeteth with the accomplishment of the promise.

Now before we can speak to any of these, we must speak a little unto some things, as necessary to be known in order to the better understanding of all. 1. We shall not dwell long in pointing out unto you what is a promise. We conceive it is a glorious discovery of the good will of GOD towards sinners; and withal, a purpose and Intendment, (and if we may say) an engagement to bestow some spiritual or temporal good upon them, or to withhold some spiritual and temporal evil from them. And certain it is, that in this description of the promise, there is a divine harmony betwixt Mercy and Truth, betwixt Rightcousness and Pact, they kiss one another; Neither shall we stand long to point out the distinction of the promises. 1. There are some promises that are conditional, and there are some promises that are absolute: absolute promises are these that have no condition annexed unto the performance of them; such a promise as is that, God will destroy the world no more by water, that is an absolute promise; such a promise was that of GODs sending his Son into the world, that was an absolute promise; and such is that promise of conversion, in giving of the heart of flesh, it is an absolute promise. As for the conditional promises they are these that do require some condition to be performed by the Christian before the accomplishment of the promise, such as that promise of salvation is, requireth believing as going before it, *He that believeth shall be saved*: And pardon, it is promised unto a Christian upon repentance, and yet we confess that there is not a conditional promise that is in all the Covenant of Grace, but it may be reduced into an absolute promise, in regard that the thing promised (in the conditional promise) is an absolute free gift, and the condition of the promise

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promise is another. 2. There are some promises that are temporal, and some that are spiritual; temporal promises are these, that promise some temporal thing unto a Christian; and spiritual promises are these, that promise the bestowing of some thing that is of everlasting enjoyment. 3. There are some promises that are not accomplished in this life, such as this, *That we shall see him as he is, and shall be made like unto him*: But for the promises of Faith and Justification, these are accomplished in this life. 4. There are some promises that are extraordinary, and there are some promises that are common: Extraordinary promises are these, that are given to some particular Believers, as a singular privilege, such was the promise that was given to Abraham in his seed should all the families of the earth be blessed and that promise that was given to Rebekah, that the elder should serve the younger: As for common promises, they are these, that every believer in Christ hath a right to make use of.

Neither shall we stand long to point out, that it is the duty of a Christian to be much in the exercise of Faith upon the promises: it is clear from Psalm 62. 8. *Trust in Him at all times, ye People.* And it is clear from the practice of that precious cloud of witnesses recorded of Heb 11. that spent their days in embracing of the promises. But, 7. We would have you consider, that it is more easie for a Christian believer to believe spiritual promises, than to believe temporal promises: it is easier to trust Christ for eternal salvation, than to trust him for our daily food, when we are reduced unto straits. And the grounds upon which we assert this may be these, 1. Because it is hard for a Christian to believe that Christs death reacheth for the purchasing of temporal promises, which more easily he taketh up in spiritual promises: for a Christian can hardly believe that such a thing was in Christs intention, as to die for our daily food, which is most certain, if we consider it in a special mercy. 2. In a Christians believing of spiritual promises, there is often some sense and reason that

helpeth him to the exercise of faith, at least they press not the contrary; but to believe a temporal promise when a Christian is reduced unto a strait, and that he can see no outgate present, sense and reason stands upon the top of his faith, and presseth him to despair, As for instance, when a Christian is leaving upon the top of a mountain and knoweth not where to sup at night to believe that there is a promise upon which he may rest, that he shall not want his food; but that the Lord have service for him, he will provide here. he hath not only reason to dispute against it, but the strong pinching sense of hunger, both crying out, *How can bread be given in the wilderness?* 3. The temptations that assault a Christian, to misbelieve upon temporal promises, they are more subtle and more consensual to a Christian, than his temptations that assault him in resting upon the spiritual promises, when a Christian is in straits in the world, the temptations that hinder his exercise of faith, they are more consonant to flesh and blood, we are ready to yield to misbelief then, because we think it is rational and speaketh the truth. 4. A Christian is often so affrighted by his daily failings or some particular more gross outbreakings in his life, that howbeit he may (through grace) be helped to believe that the Lord shall make out these promises which concern his eternal salvation, and so do him good in his latter end; yet he may be sadly perplexed and distrustful, in making use of any particular temporary promise, for drawing forth any comfort or encouragement therefrom, as to this present exigent; because he knoweth although the Lord doth forgive his peoples iniquities, yet he may take vengeance on their inventions, *Psal. 99.8.* and therefore may punish his present failing with the like calamities as he hath done others. 5. There is also much of a natural and carnal self-love to a present life, remaining in the best, that we are many times worse to satisfy in our securities for the things of this life, than that which is to come, and can more easily trust the Lord for our souls, than for our bodies; so that though his naked word will sometimes sa-

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is for the one, yet it will not for the other. And the last ground of it may be with a Christians unacquaintance with that lot of exercising Faith upon temporal promises, there being many who think not that there is use for Faith, except for Salvation and the things above, which maketh his Faith upon these more difficult, than upon promises that are spiritual; And this may appear most clearly, in that we find men more easily bear their spiritual wants, (even a Christian that is most exercised) than they bear their temporal wants: and more corruption and impatience doth arise from temporal want, than for spiritual want.

2. Consider, that all a Christians duties are turned over into promises: there is not a duty that is required of a Christian, but it is converted into a promise. Is not Faith a duty, in 1 John 3. 23. *This is his Commandment, that ye should believe?* And is not that turned over into a promise, in Jer. 3. 16. *Thou shalt call me thy Father?* The word importeth, not only an act of necessity, but of violence, thou shalt do it. And in the 13 of Zachary at the close, *Thou shalt call me thy Father.* And so in Ezek. 36. 19. Is not mortification a Christians duty, Col. 3. *Mortifie therefore your members;* and it is turned over in a promise, Jer. 32. 28. and Ezek. 36. 29. where he promiseth that he will purge away all their uncleanness. And it is most clear, from Mic. 7. 16. *I will subdue* (saith he) *all thine iniquities;* it is not said, *thou must subdue them;* but *I will do it.* Is not the knowledge of God a commanded duty? And yet it is turned over into a promise, in the Covenant of Grace. *They shall know me from the highest unto the lowest; neither shall there be need any more, that one should say, know the Lord, for they shall be taught of me.* Is not the Commandment of fear your duty, as is clear from Eccl. 12. 13. and yet that is likewise turned over in a promise, *I will put my fear in their inward part, that they shall not depart away from me.* So tenderness is a Christians duty, and yet is turned over in a promise: *I will take away their heart of stone, and give them an heart of flesh.* And that I may say no more

more of this, look but to these four places, and there ye will see almost all duties turned over in promises: there is Jer. 31. Jer. 32. Ezek. 11. and Ezek. 36. ye will see all the duties of the Covenant converted into promises. But may not some say, what advantage is there of this? Much certainly every way, that duties are turned over into promises: it may give a Christian hope that once he will perform these duties. Will ye not once be tender? Yes certainly; because your tenderness lieth within a promise. Will ye not once be much in the exercise of fear? no doubt ye will; and the ground of it is this, because our fear lieth within a promise, and so of the rest. And 2. There is this advantage of it, that all the duties required of a Christian, are turned over in promises because by this means a Christian may go to God, when he cannot perform such a duty, and desire him to fulfill his word, and accomplish his Promise; and so may make use, not only of the Omnipotency of God, but of the Faithfulness of God also.

There is this third consideration that we would propose, that there are some things of a Christian within a promise, that he doth not believe to be within it, especially these three; First, the challenges of a Christian are within a promise, when ye are convinced, that is the accomplishment of a promise: this is clear from Isa. 30. 21. where convictions and challenges are turned over in a promise; *when thou art turning unto the right hand or to the left; thine ears shall hear a voice behind thee crying, this is the way walk in it.* And it may be clear, that our convictions are the accomplishment of promises, because it is the work of the comforter as well to convince, John 16. 9. as its for him to make one to rejoice; and if a Christian could believe that his challenge were the accomplishment of a promise, he might embrace his challenges, he might see the faithfulness of God in his challenges, and he might see much Love in his challenges. 2. A Christians cross is within a promise; so that when a Christian meets with such afflictions, he may sit down and cry out, that is the ac-

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accomplishment of a promise; and this is clear from
Psal. 89. 31, 32. Wherein the midst of the promises
 of the Covenant of Grace, that promise of visiting their
 iniquities with Rods, is put in the bosom of them, and
 from *Psal. 119. 75.* *In faithfulness hast thou afflicted me?*
 Why doth David say, In faithfulness? it was this,
 because this cross was the accomplishment of a promise
 and it may be clear also from that word, *Heb. 12. 7.*
Forget not the exhortation (speaking of the cross) the
word is, Forget not the consolation that speaketh unto you.
 As if the Holy Ghost did say, crosses do yield much
 consolation, as in verse 11. *They yield the peaceable*
fruits of righteousness; And if this were believed, that
 our crosses were the accomplishment of the promises,
 it would help a Christian unto much humble submission,
 and there would not be much murmuring under them,
 if once we did believe that they were the accomplish-
 ment of a promise. Yea, there is this advantage fur-
 ther that if we did believe that our crosses were the
 accomplishment of a promise, we would be much in ad-
 vancing holiness under our cross. There is nothing
 that obstructeth the sweet Fruits of righteousness under
 a cross, so much as impatience; and I would say this to
 commend the cross, a Christian never moveth so swiftly
 to Heaven, as when he is under a sanctified Cross; a
 cross when it is sanctified, will prove a Christians moti-
 on to Heaven, more than the enjoyments; for our enjoy-
 ments ordinarily do retard our way, as much as further
 it. And there is this, thirdly, That is within the pro-
 mise, even your daily Food, and the hairs of your head;
 the hairs of a Christians head are all numbered, &c within
 the Covenant; so that ye may see what a high respect
 Christ hath put upon Christians: that is clear from that
 Word, *PL. 134. 5. 8.* *He hath given Meat unto them that*
eat him, He will ever be mindful of his Covenant.

Our fourth Consideration shall be, to point out a lit-
 tle these grounds upon which Christ doth delay his ac-
 complishment of the promises; it is certain that Chri-
 stians is oftentimes put to this. *Doth his promise fail for*
evermore

evermore I and cryeth out, *why art thou become unto me as a liar, and as waters that fail* : And the grounds of this delay are these ; Christ knoweth that a Christian can often better improve the delay of the accomplishment of the promise, than he can improve the accomplishment it self : we might find this in our experience, it being (for the most part) easier for a Christian to bear his crosses, than to bear his enjoyments : I think *David* had never so sweet a time as is then, when he was pursued as a partridge by his Son *Abshalom* ; then grace did breathe forth most sweetly in his actions ; but let *David* be under prosperity, and then we see he falleth in the sin of Adultery : And therefore never repine when ye are under a cross ; for certainly, if we had spiritual understanding, we would not judge it so great a hazard to be under a Cross, as under prosperity, since we have greater strength to bear the one, than to endure the other. 2. The slowness of a Christian to whom the promises are made, this makes the promises to be delayed in their performances, as was clear in the people of *Israel*, they are forty years in a wilderness before that promise of entering into *Canaan* is accomplished ; it was a promise that could have been accomplished in a few days, and yet because of their sin, it was not accomplished for forty years : ye may see from that word, *Numb. 14. 33, 34.* The accomplishment of the promises is delayed, that Faith may be more put in exercise ; this is clear from that remarkable word, *Psal. 115. 19. Until the time that his word came* ; that is, until the word of the Lord was accomplished ; the word of the Lord tried him ; that is it was the matter of his exercise, an exercise especially unto faith ; for indeed it is much for a Christian to believe upon a word, when it is delayed in its accomplishment. The fourth ground of delays is, that the exercise of prayer may be more ; and it is certain, that the best improvement of delays is, to be much in Prayer ; the promises they occasion prayer, as is clear from *Exod. 4. last They believed, and bowed down their heads and worshiped.* And from

From 2 Sam. 7: 27. Where the great promises being made to David, he cryeth out, *Therefore have I found in my Heart to pray this prayer unto God. And it is clear from* 19: 49. *Perform thy Word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.* It is a bad improvement of delays, when we turn impatient; and it is a bad improvement of delays, when we quite our confidence, knowing, that promises are accomplished after delays, and they have a luster upon them, that they may compensate all the delays. 5. There is this other ground of the delays of accomplishment of the promises, even that the thing that is promised, may be sweet to a Christian when it cometh: this is clear from that word of Solomon. Prov: 13: 12. *Hope deferred maketh the heart sick; but when the desire doth come, it is as a tree of life.* O! but the mercy that cometh to a Christian through a promise, is sweet; yea a drink of cold water taken up as the accomplishment of a promise, is more sweet than a feast of fat things full of marrow, wine on the lees well refined; to take up your bread and your drink as the accomplishment of your promises, it would make them refreshful to you. 6. The Lord delays his promises, that a Christian may be more in the exercise of dependency, and may be always kept about the Throne. A Christian goeth to God from a threefold principle? he goeth to God from a principle of Faith, from a principle of Necessity, from a principle of Love. But would you know that which putteth a Christian of necessity to God? It is a principle of necessity. And believe it, that if necessity did not drive a Christian unto the foot of the Throne, we would seldom go from a principle of Love, or from a principle of Faith. And there is this last ground of the delay of the accomplishment of the promises, that the glory of the wisdom of God may appear and the Glory of his Power in the accomplishment of the promise. When the promise is long beneath ground, then the wisdom and power of God doth more appear in the accomplishment of that promise. And from this I would only say to Christians that are under this exercise, complaining

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of the want of the performance of the promises, these few things, believe that the promise shall once be accomplished, that *though the vision tarry, yet at last it shall speak*. 2. Believe, that every hours delay of the accomplishment of the promises, hath a sweet design of love: there is not one moment of delay, but it is for the advantage of a Christian, as it is clear from that word Rom. 8. 27. And 3. That promise that cometh after long delays, it hath these three sweet and soul-refreshing attendants. 1. It is performed most seasonably, a Christian if he will observe, he will see infinite wisdom shining in timing the accomplishment of the promise to such a particular day: a Christian will be constrained to cry of it, if the promise had been fulfilled before, there had not been such Art of wisdom, appearing in the performance of it. 3. That the promise when it is accomplished, will engage a Christian more in the exercise of Love, than for promises accomplished at a short and smaller time: there is nothing that will so inflame the soul with love, as to have a promise accomplished after delays. And 3. The promises accomplished after delays, have much sence waiting upon the performance thereof: I think hardly a Christian ever met with the accomplishment of a promise after long delay, but his *soul was made as a watered garden, and as springs of water, whose waters fail not*, this promise falleth and cometh to a Christian perfumed with love.

Now we shall shut up our discourse at this time, and shall only speak to these six defects of a Christians Faith, in believing of the promises. 1. That our faith is impatient, we cannot stay upon the promises if it be delayed. Hence ye will see that in scripture often, patience is annexed to faith, which speaketh this, that it is impossible for a Christian, to believe as he ought, that wanteth the exercise of patience. So Heb. 6. 12. *Be ye followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promise*. And that word in Rev. *This is the faith and patience of the Saint*. 2. Our Faith in closing with the promises, it is most unconstant. A Christian when first a promise is born in up-

his spirit, he will then believe the promise, and joyne
with it; but after six or seven days go about, he will
change his Faith; that is remarkable clear from *Exod.*
31. compared with *Exod.* 6. 9. When first the pro-
mise cometh to the people of Israel, that they shall go
out of Egypt, it is said of them in the fourth Chapter at
the close, *They believed the promises and worshipped*; But
look to them in *Exod.* 6. 9. and there ye will see them
not believing, because of *bitterness and anxiety of heart*.
And I will tell you the grounds why our Faith is uncon-
stant. 1. Sometimes the reading of a promise to a Chri-
stian, will be as savoury meat; sometimes when a Chri-
stian will read one time in the Covenant, it will be per-
fumed with love, and his soul will be transported with
joy after it; and at another time, when he shall read
that promise again, it will be *tasteless as the white of an
egg, and as his sorrowful meat*, 2. That we are not much
in studying the exercise of the things that are promised,
which certainly would cure short many of our doubts.
There is this third defect of our Faith, that we are not
diligent; a diligent Faith we call this; that after a Chri-
stian hath believed, he would be much in the exercise
of Prayer for the accomplishment of the promises, he
would be much in the exercise of Meditation, to make
that promise sweet and lively to him. And a fourth
defect is this, we build our Faith more upon dispen-
sations than upon the Word; when dispensations say
that which the promise saith, then we will believe;
but when dispensations speak the contrary language un-
to the promise, then we will reject our confidence and
hope, I will tell you great mysteries of believing; it
is hard for a Christian to believe, when the Commenta-
ry seemeth to destroy the Text; that is when the
Commentary seemeth to declare that the promise shall
never be accomplished. In sum it is this, it is hard to
believe, when dispensations will say the Word of the
Lord will fail, and when promises bids you believe. 2.
It is hard for a Christian to take impossibilities in the
one hand and the word of Promise in the other, and
say,

I say, O precious Christ, reconcile these two together, that impossibilities do not destroy the promise, but that the promise may be accomplished, notwithstanding of this. 5. We have these defects of Faith amongst us, that we build our Faith more upon sense, than upon the word of promise; when a Christian is in a good frame, he will believe; but when Christ hideth his face, he will then give up his hope. And lastly, there is this that our Faith upon the promises is general; we believe the truth of the promises, but we study not to make particular application of them, I shall not stand long to make any use of what we have spoken; Only I would have the Christians of this Age, and those that are here, to go home with this conviction, the damnable neglect of believing the promises. A Christian neglecteth these three duties of Religion most, he neglecteth the duty of self examining, the duty of believing the Promises, and that noble soul-exalting duty of meditation: these three duties a Christian doth so constantly neglect, that almost he is above the reach of conviction, that he doth neglect them. But I would say a word unto these that are destitute of the Faith of the promises, and are strangers unto these blessed things that are recorded within the Covenant: And it is only this; doubtless you must believe your senses, if you will not believe his word. It is a question indeed, which of all the senses shall be most satisfied in Heaven, whether that of seeing, *When we shall behold the King in his beauty, and see him as he is*; or that of hearing, when we shall hear these melodious *Hallelujahs* of that innumerable company, which are about the Throne without any jarring among them all; or that of smelling, when we shall find the sweet perfume of his garments, which are perfumed with all the *powders of the Merchant*; or that of touching, when we find *Maries* Inhibition taken off, *touch me not*, and be admitted to embrace him who is now ascended to his Father; or that of tasting, when we shall drink of these rivers of consolation, *that shall never run dry*. This I say, is indeed a question; And give me leave to tell

Will you, O Atheists enemies of God ; It is also a question, which of all the five senses of a Reprobate shall be most tormented in Hell, and what would you answer to it now ? Whether think ye the sense of sight, when ye shall behold the darkness of wrath, the devil and his angels, and your fellow-prisoners in that dungeon ? Or whether shall your sense of hearing be most tormented in hell, when ye hear these screechings and howlings that shall eternally ascend up before God, by the souls that are in prison ; O ! but the greatest enemy would have compassion on his enemy to hear their cry : Or whether will ye say the sense of tasting shall be most tormented when ye shall drink of these rivers of brimstone ? Or will the sense of touching, when ye shall be eternally scorched with these flames of eternal indignation ? Or the sense of smelling, when they shall eternally be as it were, suffocated with the smoke of that sulphurous furnace that shall never be quenched. O ! think you if Cain would come from hell and preach that doctrine that we should not persecute the Saints, would we listen unto him ? If Absalom should come from hell and should preach against the evil of ambition would we listen unto him ? And if Ahitophel should rise from the dead and preach that doctrine unto you, *Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom*, would you stop your ears ? Or if Judas would come from Hell, and preach to you the evil of hypocrisie, in betraying the Son of man with a kiss, would you believe him ? Or if *Dives* that is recorded in the Gospel, should come from hell and choose that Text to preach upon ? Jam: 5. 1. *Go ye rich men and howl, and weep for your miseries that shall come upon you*. And if *Demas* would come and second him with that word, *love not the World, nor the things that are in the World* ? I fear ye would cry out, *we will embrace that Doctrine at another time*. We desire not to insist much upon these ; but O ! to believe that there is an eternity of pain, and that there is an eternity of joy : I will give you a description of the Atheist, and let him think upon it, it is easier to convince hundreds of you, that

that ye want the fear of God, than that ye want the faith and love of God, Oh an imaginary faith, and a conceit of love! Will ye ever quite these two Idols? I confess, once ye shall have a Faith that no man shall ever rob you of, and that is, the faith of that truth, that when once ye enter into eternity of pain, there is no redemption out of that place. Awake, awake, for behold the Judge cometh, and he shall render vengeance unto those that know him not. To his blessed and most precious Name, we desire to give praise.

S E R M O N II.

2 Pet. 1. 4. *Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious Promises, that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*

THough Justice and Judgement be the Habitation of his Throne, yet Mercy and Truth do go before it, as two divine Ushers to convey us home unto God. There are these two things that we would have Christians principally to study; 1. That ye would be much in the study of these wrongs and injuries that ye have done to Christ. And, 2. That ye would be much in the study of these infinit acts of precious condescendency, that Christ hath manifested towards you, that the one may provoke you unto sorrow and humility, and the other may provoke you unto a sweet astonishment and admiration. And I would ask you this, if Christ should present that challenge unto you, which *Absalom* presented unto *Hushai*, *Is this thy kindness to thy friend?* O! beloved, What could you answer, when you were thus reproved? I think if Christ have not forgetfulness for that blessed end, to forget the wrongs and injuries of his own, I know not unto what use Christ should have forgetfulness, for he knoweth not what it is to forget our good works, but

he hath a blessed art of forgetting our wrongs, though we may say on the contrary, that we have a blessed art of forgetting them our selves. There are three things that a Christian doth forget; they forget Christ, that he is the great Author of Promises, so that he may charge them with this, *Why have ye forgotten me?* 2. They forget their mercies, these divine receipts of love, that Christ hath given unto them. 3. They forget even their iniquity; sometimes they forget them before Christ doth forget them, and pass an act of Pardon upon them. I will not stand long to plead with you for undervaluing of that blessed and noble plant of renown; I think if there were no more to evidence that low esteem that we have of Christ, but only this, that we are so much in slighting the promises, it were more than sufficient; but besides, is there not this to testify how much you undervalue that *holy and just one*; that we study more to have an outward conformity to him than an inward? We may call the Christians of the time *Nephthali*, they are *as a hind let loose*, and they give goodly words, but we do not give Christ goodly practice; and there is this also that testifieth our undervaluing of Christ, that we slight so much secret and retired correspondence and communion with him. I suppose, there are some that are here, whose consciences beareth them record, they do not exercise themselves unto godliness, and I shall only say that word, that *Gideon* spake in another case, *If God be with us, how then is all this come upon us?* such a spirit of formality, such a spirit of laziness, such a spirit of hardness, and such a spirit of undervaluing of Christ: I suppose that if there were a Chronicle written of all the lives of the Saints that have been since *Adam's* days; and the Christians of this time should read over all that Chronicle, when they should begin and read the life of *Adam*, they might put this to the close of it, my life is not like his; and when they should read the life of *Abel*, they might put this to the close of it, my life is not like his, and when they should read the life of

Enoch,

Enoch, they might put this to the close of it, my life is not like his. O! to which of the Saints can we go? And if we should call, is there any that would answer you, *thy life is like mine?*

But to come to the words; we told you at the last occasion that we spake upon them, that there were these things concerning the promises, holden forth in them. 1. The rise of the promises is holden forth in these words, *whereby*; or as we cleared, the word may be thus rendred, *by whom*, who relateth unto Jesus Christ.

The second thing concerning the promises holden forth in the verse, is, the property of the promises, and they are these four: 1. That the promises are free, holden forth in the words, *Whereby are given unto us*; all the promises of the everlasting Covenant are free, and not debt. There is that second property of the promises, that they are *unchangeable*, holden forth in the word *Given*, the gifts and the calling of God *being without repentance*. And the third property of the promises was, That they were exceeding *Great*. And the fourth, That they were exceeding *Precious*.

The third thing concerning the promises holden forth in the words, is the advantages that floweth to a Christian by the promises, that by them they might be *made partakers of the divine nature*.

And the last thing concerning them was, that time when the promises were especially accomplished, it was then, when we had escaped the pollution of the world through *fall*.

Now as for the first thing, to wit, the fountain, original and rise of the Promises, which is Jesus Christ *by whom*; In speaking unto this, we shall speak a little unto these two, 1. In what respects Christ may be said to be the Fountain and Original of the Promises; and we conceive he may be said to be so; First, Because he purchased the Promises unto us by his own precious Blood. There is not a Promise in all the everlasting Covenant, but it is the price of the Blood of the Son

of God : this is clear in *Eph. 3. 12, 13.* where
 speaking of the Gentiles, that they were strangers unto
 the Covenant of Promise : he setteth down in the 13.
verse, the way by which they were brought near unto
 the Covenant, and had right unto it, it was *through the*
blood of his Cross : and it is clear in *Ephes. 3. 6.* that the
 promises of the Gospel, were given unto us in him, that
 is, through the purchase of him, and his merits. And
Pet. 1. 19. where we are said to be bought by his blood,
 the promise of Redemption was the price of Blood.
 Secondly, Christ may be said to be the Fountain of the
 promises, in this respect, that he is the Person unto
 whom the Promises of the Covenant are first made,
 and through him are made over unto us : this is clear
 in *Gal. 3. 16.* the Promises were given unto *Abraham*,
 not unto many seeds, but as unto one, that is Christ ;
 and it is clear from *2 Tim. 1. 9.* where the promises of
 Grace and Salvation are said to be given unto us in him
before the world was made. It is true that the promises
 are not given to Christ considered only as the Son of God,
 (for he had no other relation to us, than the Father or
 the Holy Ghost) but yet they are first made to him as
 the Mediator and Head of the Church, and as that blef-
 sed Days-man, King of Saints, and the great Lord-Keeper
 of all the Rights of the young Heirs of Glory ; And
we all receive of his fulness, and grace for grace. Thirdly,
 There is this respect in which Christ may be said to be
 the Fountain of the Promises, that he it is by whom
 we have a right unto all the Promises ; this is clear,
1 Cor. 3. 12, 13. where these two are conjoyned, *ye*
are Christs, and then, *all things are yours*. If once a Soul
 close with Christ in the Covenant of promise, there is
 not one promise in Scripture but he may write this
 superscription above it, *This is mine, this is mine*. Fourth-
 ly, Christ may be said to be the Fountain of the pro-
 mises, in regard that he is the person that applyeth
 the Promises, and maketh us to rest upon them, and
 to believe them ; this *David* did acknowledge, *Psalm*
119. 49. Remember thy word unto thy servant upon which
thou

thou hast caused me to hope: as if David said, I had never believed a promise, except thou hadst caused me; and it is clear, Eph. 2. 8. where Faith is called the Gift of God, even Faith to believe the Promises, it is the royal Donation and Gift of Christ. 5. He may be said to be the Fountain of the Promises, in that he qualifies us for the accomplishment of them. Christ giveth us strength to obey the condition that is annexed to the promise, and Christ he infuseth habitual Grace in us by which we may be helped to exercise Faith upon the promises: so that grant all the Scripture were Promises; yet if Christ did not help us, we would never believe a promise, and there would never a promise be accomplished unto us! 6. The last respect in which Christ may be said to be the Fountain of the Promises is, that all the promises of the everlasting Covenant, they have their accomplishment through him according to that word, 2 Cor. 1. 20. *All the Promises of God are in him, yea, and in him, Amen.* So that ye are to bless Christ, not only for the giving of the Promises, but for the accomplishment of them also.

That which secondly we shall speak to from this, that Christ is the Fountain of the Promises, shall be to press upon Christians these three excellent and Soul concerning duties. The first, that they would not have a light account of the Promises, since they are Rivers and Streams that flow from that blessed Ocean. O! but if a Christian did believe that the promise that he hath for his daily bread, it was bought with the Blood of the second Person of the blessed Trinity, would he not have an high account of that promise? And let me tell you, it is impossible for the promises to be in high account with you, till once ye reduce them unto their Rise and to their Fountain; but once know that all the Promises are sweet streams of love, that have run through the heart of precious Christ, and from hence they have flowed unto you: and then when this is believed, how shall ye sit down and comfort your selves in the promises, and rejoice exceedingly in them.

The

Our first Promise.

11

The second duty that we press upon you from this, is that since Christ is the Fountain and Original of the Promises, be much in the application of the Promises. And here I shall speak a little upon these three things. A little unto the Evidences and Marks of those that have a right to apply the promises, and shall only name unto you these few. The first is, to be a person under convictions of sensible need and necessity of such a promise: have ye convictions of such a necessity? Is it from that ye may infer, I have a right to the promises, and are not these glad Tidings? I know there are some that are under such convictions of their sins, that they think it boldness to apply the Promises. But I would say this unto you, that if ye were under sensible convictions of your needness, ye would give a world for an Hair of a Promise whereby to hang: believe in, the exercise of misbelief is never at its height, till ye would be content to dig through the earth to get a Promise, and till we were at that, that our Souls would pursue after them from the one end of the world to the other: and for the ground of this assertion, that sensible necessity giveth a right to the promises, if ye will look to these great Promises of the everlasting Covenant. Are they not given to that Christian that is under a need? *Isa.* 55. 13. and *Mat.* 11. 28. where the great Promise of the Gospel is given out, and the invitation of Jesus Christ, is unto *those that are weary and heavy laden.* Christ would account it an excellent courtship, that ye should not dispute, but believe, and that ye would look upon your necessities, as his call to believe the Promises. 2. A person that hath an high account of the Promises, he hath a right to apply the Promises: Let once your Soul close with Christ by Faith and Love, and then you may with boldness close with the Promises. I confess if you were more in believing the Promises, ye would have a higher and more full esteem of the Promises. Would you know the reason that Christ is not accounted matchless? It is, because of this, our necessities

necessities of the Promises are not always within our sight, and our exercising of Faith upon the Promises is not our daily work. 3. This looketh like a right to the Promise; that which is born in upon a Christian's spirit when he is near God in Prayer, & is under some sensible exercise of his own infirmity, he hath readily a right to apply the Promise: As for instance, when a Christian is debarring himself out of Christ, which is but an unpleasant exercise, to meet with a promise born in upon their spirit, that giveth them some ground of hope, that they may apply and rest upon Christ; or when a Christian is fainting under affliction, and is like to give over; to meet with a word of promise born in upon his spirit, that doth uphold him in the day of his tryal, he may probably conclude he hath a right to believe that promise. 4. There is that evidence, persons that have a high account of the promises, that have a right to apply the promises, it is an excellent and most concerning work for a Christian to believe the excellency of the promises, when he cannot have the actual application of the promises: For when once a Christian cometh to this, that the great things of the everlasting Covenant are matchless in his eyes; then that is the *valley of Acher* and a door of hope, that ere long Christ will apply them. 5. When a Christian hath great delight in the promises when they are sweet to his taste, and are the refreshing and rejoycing of his heart, that is an undeniable sign that he hath a right to make use of such promises; were your souls never refreshed by reading of the boundless Covenant of love, and the sweet promises that are in it? I would have Christians marking these promises that have upholden them in their straits, I would have them marking the promises that hath been lively to their souls, and say this once was my goodly meat, and made me to rejoyce in the *house of my affliction*; and I would have a Christian marking the time of the accomplishment of the promises, in which he will see infinite wisdom shining in ordering the accomplishment of the promises to such a time.

and I would have a Christian marking the frame of his own spirit, when the promises are accomplished, as ye will find often in Scripture) and by all this, you shall find such a reviving and profitable delight in the promises, that should give a very full evidence of our right unto them. 6. Lastly, When a Christian under straits, can receive consolation from no other thing, but all prove Physicians of no Value, and miserable comforters; when a Christian is convinced, there is no joy to be had under such a cross, but in the Faith of the promises, that is an evidence that this person hath a right to the promises. I would only say, O beloved in the Lord, is not this your guilt, your undervaluing of the promises, and your little exercise of Faith? I would pose you with this, when last studied ye to apply any promise of the covenant of grace? When last did ye exercise Faith upon any of them? Shall I tell you what is the practice of the most part of us? We study perhaps to apply one promise, but for the rest of the promises we lay them aside, and do totally neglect them: we study to apply the promises of salvation, and of having redemption through Christ: but for the promises of sanctification, for the promises to help us to perform duties, for the promises to support us under the cross, for the promises to comfort us in our way to Heaven, for promises in reference to all ordinary things, we are not much in application to these. O! but if a Christian were believing the promises, he might sit down even while he is here, and sing one of the songs of Zion, though yet *but in a strangeland.*

The second thing that I shall speak to upon the application of the Promises, shall be to propose unto you some Rules that you would make use of in the application of them; and I shall name unto you these.

First, Study these four things, one is the Faithfulness and Truth of the Promises, that such a thing is the saying of him that is the *faithfull witness, and Amen.* This was the practice of Paul, 1 Tim. 1. 10. the way how he was brought to make application of the pro-

mises, was, 1. By laying down that conclusion, this is a faithful saying. Rev. 21. from the beginning to the 6 verse, where there are great Promises made, and much spoken to the commendation of Heaven, this is subjoyned in the 6 verse, *These are faithful and true sayings of God*. As if John had said, all that I have spoken concerning Heaven will be to no purpose, except ye believe the truth of the promises, and this was the practice of David, 2 Sam. 7. 28. *Thy Words are truth, O Lord*, he subjoyneth this unto the actual application of the promises. 2. Study the sweetness and excellency of the promises, this was the practice of Paul 1 Tim. 1. 15. *This is a faithful saying, and then he subjoyneth, and worthy of all acceptation*. And this was the practice of David, Psal. 119. 72. *I have esteemed the Laws of thy mouth, better than thousands of gold and silver*. O! such an opinion, to esteem the promises higher than thousands of gold. It is Heterodox against the most part of you, that prefer t^e world before the promises of the Covenant: and it was his practice, Verse 103. and 162. *I rejoyce at thy word as one that findeth great spoil*, he had higher account of the promises, than to divide the spoil after war. 3. Let the Christian study the necessity that he hath of the promises, that there is no way of winning above that necessity, but by the closing with the promise, and laying hold upon it. 4. Lastly, a Christian would study the suitableness that is in the promise to answer their necessities; that if they be under need, there is a precious way of remedy manifested unto them by these.

The second rule that we would prescribe in the application of the Promises, is. That ye do not expect sensible comforts immediatly after ye have believed the Promise. A Christian may apply the promises and yet want the joy and sweetness that is in them. This is clear, Psal. 119. 85. *My soul cleaveth unto the dust*. There he is under much anxiety, and much sorrow; and yet he is a Believer of the Promises in the mean time, as the words following do clearely

Quick

quicken me according to thy word; he layeth claim to the promise, and this is clear in the 8th Verse of that Psalm, *My soul doth faint within me, There is much exercise of sorrow, and yet he is a Believer of the promise, but I hope in thy Word.* A Christian after he hath believed the Promise, he would put a blank in Christs hand concerning the sweetness of the Promise to be made out in its own time. What is sence? It is the precious indulgence of Christ that he giveth to his own. I would press this upon you, prophesie nothing before your believing of the promise; but having believed, ye may surely prophesie that the promise shall be accomplished in its own time, and the word that he hath spoken shall certainly come to pass; but as for sence, as for quickning, as for comforting, as for receiving, ye must put a blank in the hand of Christ, to dispeace these things to you as he seeth fit.

The third Rule in the Application of the Promises, is, That ye do not build your Faith upon this, that the promises shall be accomplished, because probability and reason seem to say the thing: I would say this to a Christian, that ye may oftentimes suspect the promise not near to be accomplished, when reason saith, *Behold the word of the Lord cometh, and that oftentimes the Lord is nearer when we begin to pass a conclusion, the word is not at hand, and the time of the accomplishment of the promises is not near: certainly, many times before Christ accomplish the promises, he will learn us to be living above sence and reason, and he will have reason to submit to Faith he will have probabilities to contradict the accomplishment of the promises, and when probabilities are furthest away, that is his time to work; this is clear in these two signal deliverances of of the people of Israel, from Egypt and Babylon; Exod. 3, 4, 5. and Ezek 7, at the beginning. And therefore as a Christian would not quite his grip of the promises, because dispensations seem to contradict the accomplishment of the promise, and sometimes cryeth out, *Why art thou become unto me**

as a liar, and as waters that fail? So on the other hand ye are to build your Faith upon the promises, and not upon dispensations, even when favourable, seeing that we know the way that Christ taketh many times to accomplish the promises, is by contrary means to our apprehension; *His paths are in the whirl-wind, and his footsteps are not known.* And may we not cry out, who can take up the ways of God, whose ways are more subtle than the way of an eagle in the air, or the way of a serpent upon a rock, or the way of a ship upon the sea, &c.

The fourth rule that we would prescribe unto you in the Application of the promise, is, That ye would close absolutely with the promises, I mean, without limiting the only One. There is limited closing with the promise, which is the frequent exercise of our hearts; we will close with the promise, but with this restraint laid upon Christ, that whensoever we begin to believe the promises, all things might go as we desire, and this is the great occasion that we do so frequently reject our confidence, and do refuse our hope, when God doth not answer our peremptory expectations.

Fifthly, We give you this rule, that ye would eye Christ much in the application of the Promises. There is a threefold sight of Christ that a Christian should have when he applyeth the promises: a Christian should have a sight of the boundless and condescending love of Christ; that so he may be constrained to hope, and may be constrained to love. 2. A Christian should eye the Faithfulness and unchangeableness of Christ, that what His blessed lips have spoken, *he will also do, and what he hath said, he will likewise bring to pass.* And 3. in the application of the promises, he must eye the omnipotency of Christ, that what he hath said, he is able to bring to pass. And O! when shall we have occasion to sing that song, *What hath God wrought for us?* Which was the song that Balaam sung, who yet was but a prophane wretch.

6. There is this rule that we would prescribe unto

you in the application of the promises, that a Christian after he hath applyed them, he would be much in the exercise of prayer for the accomplishment of these promises; this was the practice of David, 2 Sam. 7. 27. when God is passing many precious promises, David, doth subjoyn that word *Therefore have I found in my heart to pray this Prayer.* And we see in Ezek. 36. 17. along that Chapter, God is passing most excellent promises; and yet in Verse 27. this is subjoyned. *For all these things, I will be enquired of the house of Israel.* And in Jer. 29. 10, 12. where the time is coming when God would accomplish his good word (as he speaketh) that is subjoyned in Vers. 12. *Then shall ye call upon me and seek after me.* And Daniel 9. 2, 3. when Daniel knew that the promise was near the time of its accomplishment, then he set himself to prayer and application to seek the face of God. I would say these three words to a Christian; the smallest mercy that a Christian meeteth with, if he can call it *Samuel*, that is, *The son of prayer*; and if he can call it *Isaac*, that is, *The child of Promise*; he may then, and doth ordinarily receive much consolation in that mercy. O! but a mercy flowing to a Christian through a promise, if it were but a drink of cold water, and a piece of brown bread, it will be more excellent cheer, than all the dainties of the Kings of the Earth. O! but to eat and drink taking these things as the accomplishment of the promises, this would make us eat our bread *With singleness of heart, and much chearfulness.* And there is this secondly, I would say unto you, when a promise is accomplished, and a Christian is not much in the exercise of Prayer in the accomplishment of it, one to a hundred if he lose not the sanctified use of the accomplishment of that promise. Ah! know ye not that a promise when it is accomplished, may be a curse to a Christian. That word is most terrible, Mal. 2. 2. *I will curse your blessings.* And the last word that I would say to this, is, that a Christian who believeth the promises, notwithstanding that dispensations seem to con-

tradier it, that promise shall be made most refreshful unto his spirit, when it is accomplished. O! but a Christian that never had much jealousy, nor much staggering about the accomplishment of the promise, when it cometh, it will be most refreshful to him: And believe it, there is not one hours entertainment of jealousy about the accomplishment of the promise, but it will impair the sweetness of the promise when it is accomplished, except so far that the transcendent and free love of Christ is seen in the accomplishment of them, notwithstanding of our misbelief.

The last rule that I shall offer a Christian in his application of the promises, when you meet with objections that ye cannot answer, but they do silence you; I will tell you what ye should do with them, misken these obstructions, and lay them by; This was the practice of believing *Abraham*, *Rom. 4. 9.* *He considered not his own body being weak, and the deadness of Sarahs womb.* The weakness of his own body, and the deadness of *Sarahs* womb, were so strong objections in the way of the accomplishment of the promises, that he could not answer them, and the way he took to refute them, was *He did not consider them*; as it were he forgot those objections and went about his duty.

The third thing that we shall speak to, in relation to the application of the promises, shall be somewhat for helping a Christian that is standing at too great a distance to get the promises applied.

First, A Christian would be much in the study of these experiences of the faithfulness of God, and what others hath met with, when ye begin to apply a promise, ye may be helped in the Faith of applying promises, by beholding these great Records of the Faithfulness of God that are extant. This was the way the Angel took with *Mary*, *Luke 1. 36.* where helping her to believe that promise, that of her should be born the Messiah: this is the way that he strengthened her. *Thy Cousin Elizabeth is now with child and hath gone six months, even she that was called barren*

Barren, And I shall only name these two places in Scripture, which may help you exceedingly, and strengthen you to believe the promises upon this account: There is that word in Exod. 12. 41, and 42. It is a most remarkable saying, *At the end of four hundred and thirty years, on that same very day,* (there was not one day missed after the time that was set, but accomplished) *In that same very day they came out.* And this is marked in Vers. 51 again: And there is that word, 1 King. 8. 56. where Solomon, when he is singing most sweetly to God, he taketh an Observation of this, *Lo, (saith he) there hath not failed one word that God hath spoken to you by his servant Moses.*

2. Ye would be much in the consideration of your own experiences, that you have in the accomplishment of promises formerly. This was *David's* way that he took to strengthen himself to believe the promises, *He that hath delivered me from the rage of the Lion, and the paw of the Bear, he will deliver me from this uncircumcised Philistine.* 1 Sam. 17. 35. and 37. 46. And this was the practice of the Apostle Paul, 2 Tim. 4. 17, 18. *God hath delivered me from the cruel lion; And from thence he subjoyneth, And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work; And this was his practice.* 2 Cor. 1. 10. where these three are sweetly knit together, *God hath delivered me, he doth deliver me, and he shall deliver me.* There is not one experience of this kind, but it reacheth that unto you, O! believe the promise. and do not call in question his Faithfulness.

3. There is that help, that ye study much the excellency of the promises; that is the most noble and excellent way to move you to apply the promises, according to that word, Psal. 119. 111. *I have made thy testimony my heritage for ever.* and the ground of it is that, *because they are the rejoicing of my heart.* The sweetness of promises would engage our heart to apply them. And there is that fourth help, a Christian would study the omnipotency of God, that so he may be helped to believe.

believe and apply the promise : This is clear in *Zec. 12.* 1. where God going to pass many excellent promises, he ushers in that discourse with high and majestrick descriptions of his power, in that he *stretcheth forth the heaven and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him.* And this was the practice of *Abraham, Rom. 4. 21.* The way how he came to believe the promise, *He counteth Him able that made it.* that he might perform it. Fifthly, for your help in applying of the promises, study much the unchangeableness of Christ and his Faithfulness, know that he is the same yesterday, and to day and for ever. This was the way that *Sarah* came to the Faith of the promises : *Heb. 11. 11.* *She believed,* and the ground of it is, that *she judged him faithful that had promised.* There is not one Act of misbelief that a Christian falleth into, but it saith that God is not Faithful, and that he is not true.

Now the last duty that we would press from this point, that Christ is the Fountain of the promises, is that we may have an high esteem of the promises, even of Jesus Christ *in whom they are yea, and Amen.* And I shall close at this time with this, are there not many here that have no respect unto him who is that *faithfulness, and the Amen*; who hath promised us *himself, and all things* : and if ye will not take with the challenge, let your hearts but answer these two or three things. 1. Hath not the loss of things in the world affected your heart more than ever the absence from Christ? Hath it not? And can such a soul say, I have an high account of the promiser? is it possible that these that will mourn more under the absence of their idols than for the want of him, that they can have an high account of Jesus Christ, I am perswaded of this, there are some Merchants that the loss of their goods at the Sea hath diverted them from their nights rest, and yet absence from Christ never divert them from their sleep one hour. O when did love to find out Jesus Christ, and to enjoy his fellowship, make you rise up in the silent watches of the night, and to pursue after him. 2. Have

not

not your souls delighted more on the enjoyment of the
 things of a World than ever they did in the enjoyment
 of Christ, is not this true, that the increase of wine and
 oil, and of silver and gold, hath affected your hearts
 more with joy than ever Christ did? and have you an
 high esteem of the Promiser? 3. Are you taking de-
 light to entertain fellowship and communion with the
 Promiser? Is this true? when went you to your Prayers,
 but ye wearied ere ye went away? and have you a high
 account of the Promiser? is not that the language of
 your hearts, *O when shall the Sabbath be over? and when
 shall the new Moon be gone, that I may pursue after my idols?*
 I would pose you with this if there were no eye to take
 notice of you, would you not slight secret Prayer? would
 you not slight Family Prayer; We love not to serve Je-
 sus Christ I know there are Atheists here, that would love
 to go to Heaven without Faith, Love, Prayer, and Repen-
 tance, they would love to go to Heaven by a way ne-
 ver one went before them. And now I shall say but this
 one word to you that are the heirs of the promise, and
 have the blessed expectation of Heaven, whatever the
 world do esteem of him: O remember and comfort
 your selves in the thoughts of the blessed day when
 Christ (after he hath past the sentence of condemna-
 tion upon the wicked) shall go in upon the head of
 the Troops of the first born, they shall walk before as
 through the ports of the new Jerusalem, having
 crowns of immortal glory upon their heads, and then
 shall follow after him his Angels, and then shall fol-
 low after him the blessed company of the first born,
 every one having the harps of God in their hands, and
 and they shall be singing as they enter in through the
 Ports of the City, *Hallelujah unto him that was dead and
 is alive, and now liveth for evermore.* O, to believe that
 day when first we shall enter in through the streets
 of the New Jerusalem, when we shall be clothed in
 white robes, having crowns upon our heads, O, such
 a day if it were believed, might make us often shake
 our glass, and stretch out our necks, (as the word is,

Rom. 18. 19.) till once we saw that blessed day were approaching to us? There is no wearying in Heaven, the Promises are now accomplished unto them, and they are inheriting the promises; when shall that word be accomplished, or when shall we have occasion to say it? *Mark 1. 37. Behold all men seek after this,* O the word that these Disciples spake to Christ: O, study to love him, study to believe on him, for be persuaded he is upon his way, and I shall say no more but this, that all the promises, that are within the bounds of this everlasting Covenant they are, yea, and Amen, in an imbraced Christ; and laid hold on by faith, so I say all the curses that are in *Deut. 25. 27. 28.* and all the curses that are within the volum of the Book of this Covenant they shall be yea and Amen in a despised Christ, and not be laid hold upon by Faith.

SERMON. II.

2 Pet. 1. 4. Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious Promises, that by these you might be partakers of the Divine Nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through Lust.

Sometimes the Soul of a Christian doth move in the paths of God, and in the way toward Zion as the chariots of *Aminadab*; when they are under the Soul enlivening and quickning influences of Heaven, and sometimes the Soul of a Christian doth move in these blessed paths, as *Pharaoh's* chariots, they drive most heavily, when there is a cloud between the precious face of Christ and them: and we conceive, that sound and spiritual exercise of Faith upon the promises would make Christians motion more swift towards Heaven. We grant Christ hath three different ways of guiding sons and daughters to glory: There are some that Christ carrieth to Heaven in a chariot paved with love, that all alongst their life, they are living within sight of that promised Land, and

and are taken up with the refreshing of heavenly joys; such as an one was *Enoch*, who spent his days in walking with God: and there are some that Christ guideth to Heaven in a chariot that is drawn with speckled horses; they have mixed dispensation of sorrow and joy attending them in their walk, and they have a winter and a summer, they have a night and a day, and such an one was *Job* 3. There are some that Christ carrieth to Heaven in a fiery chariot, that all alongs their life they are under distracting terror of the most high, and are living perpetually to their own apprehensions upon the borders of hell and such an one was *Heman* whom Christ thus guided to Heaven; however if we shall go there, we need not much dispute the way how we came, *for he doth all things well*. And upon the other part, Satan hath three different ways of guiding souls unto everlasting torment, there are some Satan carrieth to hell in a chariot of delusion, maketh them believe that they are still going to Heaven, and such are the hypocrites in Zion: and I shall say, I think that chariot was never so filled as it is in these days. O fear that anxious disappointment that many of you (it is like) will meet with! An hypocrite he hath strong hopes, he hath strong idols, he hath strong delusions, these are his three attendants. And there are some that Satan carrieth to hell in a chariot of prophanity and ignorance of God, *whose judgment goeth before hand*, and they are known that they are going there. And there are some that Satan carrieth to hell in a chariot of civility whose Religion stands in this, *concerning the letter of the Law to be blameless*. And certainly believing of the promises and studying to exercise faith upon them, is that which might prevent many of these damnable soul destroying and murdering delusions that are within some of our breasts. There are three things in Scripture that are called precious: Christ he is called precious. *1 Pet. 2. 7*. Faith is called precious, *1 Pet. 1. 1*. To you that are partakers of the like precious faith with us; and the promises they are called precious

cious in the words that we have read, and Faith (as it were) hath two blessed eyes, by one of these it beholdeth Christ, and by another of these it beholdeth the promises, and fixeth himself upon them. O Christians and expectants of Heaven, would you know what is the rise of all the sad things that have befallen you in these days? It is this, in short, ye believe not the promises. O Christians what is the reason that ye carry not your crosses with patience? It is because ye believe not the promises by which your souls must be upholden in the day of your affliction. O Christian, what is the rise of your little mortification? Is it not because ye believe not the promises; for by them ye should be *made partakers of the divine nature*. O Christian, what is the ground that ye pray so little, and that you pray with so little success? Is it not because ye believe not the promises. A Christian when he goeth to pray, he should take these two things along; 1. The sensible convictions of his necessities: And, 2. The precious promise that is given to answer that necessity, the one would provoke fervency, and the other Faith. Are there not some here that know not what it is to pray upon a Promise, and that maketh you to pray to so little purpose, O Christian, what is your reason of your so much sorrow, and of your little spiritual comfort? it is that ye believe not the promises: It is no wonder that your name is called *Marah* because ye exercise not faith upon the precious promises of God. I think without wronging you or any that are here: I doubt much if ever Christians had such hearts, as the most part of us have: O what a heart is that, that can neither pray nor praise? both are alike mysteries unto them; What a heart is that O Christian that can neither believe promises, believe threatnings, nor obey Commands? What a heart is that, that can neither sorrow for sin, no rejoyce in God; and what a heart is that, that can neither love Christ when he is present, nor can they long for Christ when he is absent, and what a heart is that, O Christians, that can neither love heaven nor can fear hell

well? and is there not such hearts with us, even with us that are here this day.

At the last occasion we speak upon these words, we speak a little to the first thing in them, which was the use and the original of the promises, holden forth in that word *whereby* or *by whom*; the second thing in the words was the properties of the promises; and we told you that there were these four holden forth in the words: the first property of the promises; is, that they are free, which is imported in that word *are given*; all the promises of the everlasting Covenant being the precious and free gifts of God: Hence you will see that oftentimes the tenor of the covenant of Grace runs upon that strain, *I will give you*, as is clear, Jer. 32. and 39. *I will give one heart*; and Ezek. 36. 26. *I will give you a new heart*, and Ezek. 11. 19. *I will give you an heart of flesh*. It is the strain of the language of the Covenant of Grace, to give.

Now in the speaking upon this first property of the promises, to wit, *their freedom*. I shall speak a little unto these two, the first thing shall be to point out unto you the way how a Christian may win to the distinct uptaking of the freedom of the promises, and then I shall from thence press some duties.

And in short, as to the first, we conceive that a Christian may win to the distinct uptaking of the freedom of the promises, by these considerations; 1. Let a Christian cast his eye upon the sweet rise, and spring or fountain of the promises, and there ye will see their freedom shining most clear: for what is the fountain of the promises; Is it not the boundless and everlasting love of Christ: this is clear, Deut. 7. 8. where God giving a reason of all the great things that he had performed for them, he setteth down the rise of it, *Because I loved you*, saith he: and again the ground of this is *Because I loved you*; There being no reason of love, but love, and it is clear, 2 Sam. 7. 2. where David having received many precious promises, he setteth down the rise of all these in that verse. *For thy words sake*

sake faith he and according to thine own heart hast thou done all these things to make them known to thy servant.

And it is clear, Ezek. 17. 18. where God calleth the time of entering into Covenant with them: *a time of love*, that love it was eminently shining in that day, when God did condescend to Covenant with them. And hence ye see in Scripture, that the promises they are called by the name of *mercy*, Mic. 7. 20. *To perform the mercy to Abraham*, which is the Promises, and they are so called; because mercy and boundless love is the sole fountain and spring of all these promises. Secondly, Consider the persons who have a right to make use of the promises. Must not the Promises be Free, when the Proclamation is upon these terms. Rev. 22. 12. *whoever will, let him come*; there is nothing to give you a right to the Promises, but only a willingness to imbrace them, if ye will ye may take them. And Thirdly, ye may read the Freedom of the Promises, in this, that any condition which is annexed to the promise, Christ giveth to the Believer strength to perform that condition; It is known that Faith is the condition of the promises, & it is certain that Christ giveth a Believer that condition as well as he giveth him the promise, Phillip. 1. 29. *To you it is given to believe*; and Eph. 2. 8. *It is the gift of God*; It is impossible for a Christian to perform the condition, except Christ who is surety for him did perform it. Fourthly, ye may read the freedom of the promises, if ye consider the time when the promises are accomplished, it is often at such a time, when the Christian hath been and is under no very spiritual frame. Hence ye will see in Ezek. 16. 60, 61. That when the promises are accomplished, then God requireth *confusion and blushing of face*, because of their former ways, and Ezek. 36. when the promises are accomplished, then that is the time when the Lord calleth them, to *remember their own evil ways, and their doings that were not good*; Yea he will have them and all the world to know, *it is not for their sakes that he doth*

And this, therefore he commandeth them to be shamed and confounded for their own ways, or the posture they were in when he accomplished his promises; And if there were no other thing to speak the Freedom of the Promises, but the tryſting of the accomplishment of them with ſuch a Frame, it were more than ſufficient; but beſides this ſee *David's* praſe, 2 Sam. 7. 8 he readeth the freedom of the promiſes, from his own imperfections; what am I (ſaith he) and what is my Father's houſe, that thou ſhouldeſt have brought me hither? And even in the ſame text, there is an emphasis in that word, *to us whereby are given to us*, as if the Apoſtle did ſay, to prove that the promiſes are gifts, I can bring no other argument ſo ſtrong as this, *They are given us*.

Fiſtly, Ye may read the freedom of the Promiſes, if ye will conſider and take up the Infinite fulneſs and all-ſufficiency of the Promiſer, that there is nothing without himſelf that can perſwade him to give ſuch promiſes. Hence ye will ſee, Gen. 17. 1. when he is making the Covenant with *Abraham*, he putteth it ſtill in the front-ſpiece of the Covenant, *I am God all-ſufficient*, as it were to put off all thought of merit that *Abraham* might have, and that *Abraham* might be perſwaded of this, that there was any imaginable perfection, in himſelf that could be ground and riſe of ſuch promiſes. And there is that laſtly, from which ye may read the freedom of the promiſes, if ye conſider the greatness of theſe promiſes, if they were of a lower nature, then were it leſs to be wondered, if merit ſhould come in to plead for it ſelf; but when a Chriſtian ſhall compare himſelf, and the greatness of the promiſes together, he cannot but then ſing that bleſſed ſong, *Theſe are the gifts and donations of God, and what am I, and what is my Father's houſe, that thou haſt brought me hither?*

Now the ſecond thing that we purpoſed to ſpeak to, is, to preſs ſome duties upon you from this, that the promiſes are free, and we ſhall lay before you theſe three; The *ſ. 2.* That ſince the promiſes of God are free; then

as you would not destroy your own souls, be much in making use and application of the promises: Are not the promises your life? Did not all the Saints that went to heaven before us, go to Heaven living upon the promises? there was not a step of *Abraham's* life; but he walked with a promise in it; there was not an affliction that *Abraham* met with, but he took comfort to himself from the promises; and I shall remove these two mistakes that are incident to Christians in the application of the promises, even from these grounds, that they are free.

The first is this, There are some Christians that will not apply the promises, because they are under the convictions of their own infirmities, and of their own baseness, so that when we press you to believe the promises, ye reject this counsel because ye consult with your own infirmities. This was the practice of *David*, *Psal 22. 4. Our Fathers trusted in thee; they trusted; and were delivered*; but he durst not, the 6. verse, *But I am a worm, and not a man, I am a reproach among the people.* And it is the same divinity that is in these days, when we press you to believe the promises, because of the great cloud of witnesses that hath gone before you, that believe the promises. O say ye, if I were like *David* and *Abraham*, I would believe the promises, but truly *David* said that same that lived before you, if I were like my Fathers, I would believe the promises, but I am not like my Fathers. And therefore I would say to you these two words.

1. Are you inferior or short unto *David* in holiness, or necessities? We do not question but all of you will answer, we are not inferiour to *David* in necessities, but in holiness; Then say ye, if we be not inferiour to *David* in necessities, but in holiness, then make use of the promises for as we cleared the last day, necessity giveth a right in making use of the promises.

2. I would say, I am certainly perswaded, that sensible necessity would cut short many of our formal debates, in closing with the promises, necessity (as ye use

use to speak) hath no Law, and necessity hath no manners. Let me say that to you who will not close with the promises, that if ye were under sensible necessity, if Christ should forbid you to close with such a promise, ye would close with it though he forbid you, as the woman of *Canaan* did, there is nothing but sensible necessity will overcome it; necessity never disputes its right, for it goeth over the belly of such a dispute, it presently maketh use of that, that its need calleth for.

Secondly. There is that other mistake amongst Christians in believing the promises, that they want the qualifications annexed to the promises, and therefore they dare not believe the promises, especially that promise, of closing with Christ. they think they are not under such a deep measure of humiliation, of sorrow for sin, nor under such a lively apprehension of the excellency of Christ. And I shall say but these six things unto these that will not close with Christ, because they want qualifications or at least have not these qualifications after such a way. First, (Let me tell thee O Christian that thus disputes) go between the first steps of a Christians way to Heaven, and the last, and see if ye can behold a grave upon which this is written, Behold here lyeth a man or woman that came to Christ to imbrace him, and he would not receive them? Did ye ever behold such a grave as this? & Why then do ye so much dispute? Will ye take a tryal of Christ? whether he will refuse you if ye come, and if he refuse you, sure I am he will do that which he never did to any before you. The 2. Thing I would say to such, that the want of such degrees of such things, ought not to be a ground of your not closing with Christ, for if ye had these qualifications that ye require, ye would maintain the same disputes that ye do now; for when we desire you to close with Christ ye answer, that your sorrow is not come to such a hight as it ought, nor is your humiliation come to such a hight as you pitch for your self to come to. O Christian, if ye come to ten times more, and yet ten times more, ye would have that

that same dispute then which ye have now, and the Ground of it is this, the more that a Christian hath real sorrow, he will oftentimes be the more in the apprehension that he hath no sorrow. Thirdly, if ye want the qualifications that are required in these that should close with Christ in the Covenant of promise, then come to Christ to get these qualifications. I would only ask at you, think ye to spin sorrow for sin out of your own hearts; Think ye to spin humiliation for sin out of these wretched breasts of yours? ye must come to Christ for sorrow, as well as ye may come for life.

Fourthly, All the qualifications that is annexed unto that promise of closing with Christ and coming to him, they point out rather the qualification of them that will come, than the qualification of these that ought to come: Ye read such a Command as that, *Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden.* O say ye, I am not weary, and I am not under the burden of sin, therefore I cannot come; I will tell you what is the real meaning of that command, Christ inviteth those who have the greatest unwillingness, to come and get willingness: But withall it sheweth this, none will come to get rest from Christ, but these that are first weary, and that this is the Lords method of working, first to make weary and, then to ease, but no such matter in his word, That first we must have a weariness of our own making, or else he will not receive us; now but when ye come ye will be weary, and he will receive you.

Fifthly, Let me say to you who thus disputes, make your want of qualifications the very Ground of your closing with Christ; I shall but in three places let you see this strange arguing of Faith in closing with the promises: There is that. *Psal. 40. 11, 12. Let thy truth continually preserve me,* that is, let thy promises be accomplished, and made lively unto me, which are my preservation: and would ye know the ground and reason that he annexeth unto this; For saith he, *Innumera-*

with compass me about, they have taken full hold of me, I am not able to look up. He maketh his very want of qualifications, the ground of his closing with the promise, and seeking the accomplishment of it; and there is that second expression which is most wonderful, *Psal. 11. David prayeth for the accomplishment of that promise Pardon my sin*, upon that same very account, *because it is very great*: And I shall give you a third place in which the arguing by Faith is most mysterious, *Ex. 33.* compared with *Exod. 34. 9.* In the first place, God denyeth the accomplishment of the Promise of going up amongst the people; And the ground he giveth of it is, *Because saith he, ye are a stiff-necked People.* And *Chap. 34. verse 9.* When *Moses* is praying for the accomplishment of the promise, *That God would go amongst them*; he taketh that same very argument out of the mouth of God; *Go up amongst us; For sayeth he, ye are a stiff-necked people*; God said, he would not go up, because they are a stiff-necked people, and *Moses* desireth him to go up because of this. And there is this lastly that we would say to you, that so much dispute, if ye would have these qualifications that ye want, ye would study to close with Christ by Faith; Would ye have sorrow for sin? then believe; Would ye have high thoughts of Christ? then believe; Would ye have humiliation? then believe; for believing is a mother grace unto all these.

The second duty that we would press upon you from this consideration that the promises are free, is; that when the promises are given to you, and are accomplished ye would study to be denied to any merit in our selves, which ye may suppose to be the rise of the giving or accomplishing of the promises: There is nothing that a Christian receiveth, but it is a fruit of infinite love: there is not a conviction that tryeth a Christian, but it is the fruit of infinite love: there is not one real sigh for sin, but it is the fruit of infinite love; there is not one blink of the precious countenance of Christ, but it is a fruit of infinite love: there

there is not the least degree of hatred against sin, but it is the fruit of infinite love; there is not the least promise that is accomplished unto you, but it is the fruit of infinite love; so that upon your receipts from God, there is reason to sing that song, *Not unto us, but unto thee doth belong the glory*: And therefore, I would press this upon you O Christians, reduce all your mercies unto the fountain, and there sit down and pen songs of everlasting praise to him. Will ye but take a view of this, there is not one bit of bread that ye eat, that is within a promise, but it is a mercy that hath come running to you through the bowels and tender heart of Christ: his heart is the fountain of all our mercies, and they sweetly stream out of that precious fountain, so that if ye had no other thing to commend your mercies from but that is a gift of the Heart of Christ, ye may take it in your arms upon this account, and solace your selves with it.

The last duty that we would press upon you from this consideration, that the promises are free, is this: Ye would be studying to close with Jesus Christ, that is promised, and freely holden out to you in the Gospel: O sinner of eight ears old, O sinner of sixty years old, O thief of Forty years old, and O sinner of twenty years old and downward! I do here invite you, as the ambassador of Jesus Christ, to embrace Christ freely offered to you in the promises; yea I do invite you by all the vertues of that noble *Plant of renown*, by that everlasting love that dwelt in his precious heart, by all the sufferings and wounds that he received, by his eternal glory, and by all the blessings and joys of heaven and by that love that ye owe to your own precious and immortal souls, that ye would come and embrace him freely offered unto you in the Gospel. And for the further pressing of this and for clearing of the way of your closing with him, I shall first propose some Gospel mysteries and sweetly agreeing contradictions, (if so we may speak) held forth in Scripture, 1. *Come and buy Christ, and yet buy him without money*; that is, come

come and receive Christ, and ye shall have as unquestionable a right to him as if ye had brought him, that ye go *buy without money* : ye have nothing to commend you to Christ but necessities, and necessities bid you come, and Christ biddeth you come, why then will ye sit idle? 1. What a Gospel mystery is that, *Ye are to buy Christ, and he is above price* there is nothing that we can give to buy that *pearl of greatest price* ; and yet we must buy him ; then the meaning is, come, and buy Christ by Faith and by forsaking of your idols, this is all the price that he doth require for himself ; and so he requireth nothing of you but what he himself doth love, or what is both your duty and advantag to forsake, and which is no gain for him to receive : Christ is not enriched by your hearts, and by giving of your consent to him. 3. This is a Gospel mystery, *that we are to buy without money and without a price, and yet to buy with a price*, according to that word, *Prov. 17. 17* There is a price put in the hand of Fools to buy Wisdom, and what is the meaning of that *to buy with price, and to buy without price* ? It is in short this, through Christ be offered to you in the Gospel freely, ye must not sit down, but be active in closing with him ; What is the price that Christ requireth of you? even this, that ye would forsake your soul destroying idols, and that ye would forsake your former evil ways, and take hold of the present opportunity for imbracing him. And O! cursed shall the heart be that will not imbrace Christ ; O but to have him one hour in our arms, it were well worth tenthousand Eternities of the enjoyment of all things that are here below : Ye would never open your arms again to another lover, if once ye had him *between your breasts*. O but a sight of him that now is the eternal ravishment of all that are above, would transport your hearts with joy, with delight, and admiration, above all expression ! *Fourthly*. There is this Gospel mystery by which we would press you to imbrace Christ. *A Christian must buy Christ, and yet he must have him freely*. Is there not an inconsistency

silence, do you suppose, between buying and having freely? But I would say this to clear it, Christ is both the seller, he is the wares, and he is the buyer; Christ he presenteth himself unto your hearts, and he desireth to sell himself; and he perswadeth and freely enableth you to buy him, I will tell you what Christ doth, he standeth without our hearts and within our hearts, he standeth without and knocketh by the Word, and he standeth within, and openeth by his Spirit. Christ, he both commandeth, and he obeyeth; both within doors, and without doors, and all this he doth freely.

The second thing I shall say to perswade your hearts to take Christ freely promised and offered unto you, shall be this; Will ye consider that there is willingness in the heart of Christ to take you. I shall give unto you these six things that speaketh our Christ his willingness to receive you. *First*, Doth he not command you to come and receive him? and if ye could multiplie objections throughout eternity, why ye should not close with Christ, ye may cut them all asunder with his knife, *This is his Commandment*: And doth he not command you, *Matth. 11. 28. Come unto me all ye that labour*. And *Isai. 55. 1. Ho, every one that thirsteth, come to the water*. *Secondly*, He doth regrave and deeply resent it, that they will not come. I think Christ never weeped so bitterly as that day when he weeped over *Jerusalem*, that ye would not imbrace him, *Luke 19. 41. thou, even thou, at least, in this thy day, had known the things that belong to thy peace*: And *Joh. 5. 40. Ye will not come to me that ye may have life*. O what think ye can be the rise of this, that Christ should sorrow, because ye will not give up your Hearts to him; doth he increase his grain when ye give him your hearts? No certainly, but he cannot endure that madness in you; that ye should forsake your only gain. *Thirdly* would you do Christ a joyful turn, and make his heart glad? imbrace him? This is clear, *Luke 15. 5. That when he findeth the sheep that is going astray, He returneth rejoicing*.

rejoycing. Fourthly, I say no more unto you, would ye
 make all the persons of the blessed Trinity to rejoyce,
 would ye make all the Angels of Heaven to lign,
 would ye make all the Saints that are round about the
 throne to exult for joy; then give your hearts up to
 Christ, and close with him in the Covenant of pro-
 mise; according to that word, Song 6. last verse, *Re-
 turn, return, O Shulamite, return, return, that we may look
 upon thee.* Four times that command is repeated, *return*
 and the great argument with which he backeth it, is,
 that all the Persons of the Trinity may rejoyce, that
 they may look upon thee. Fourthly, Consider but how he hath
 undefended to give himself at a very low rate: what
 will ye give for Christ? O sinners, what will ye give
 for him? would ye give the world for Christ? I will
 tell you what ye will get Christ for; ye will get him
 for a very look, *Isa. 45. 22. Look unto me, O all ye ends
 of the earth;* And think ye not that it is a matchless
 mercy, that the thirty three years sufferings of Christ,
 the pains and tortures of his heart, his being under
 the unsupportable wrath of an offended God; the Fruit of
 that should be yours for a look, will ye deny that
 for Christ; O! do you ever think to find a more down-
 coming Market? Yea, Fifthly, Doth not this speak an
 admirable willingness to have you, he is to give you
 that look. It is impossible for these cursed eyes of ours,
 ever to give precious Christ a look, and therefore he
 hath promised, to give that to us, that we may give
 to him, *Zech. 12. 10. They shall look to me,* that very
 look ye are to get from Christ, and ye see it is within
 the compass of a promise. Lastly, That speaketh Christs
 willingness to receive and take you, that he doth not
 make the first refusal. O Christians that are now in
 Christ, if Christ had taken a hundred refusals from you,
 he should never have been in heaven; but he waiteth
 for an answer, and doth not rake us at our first word,
 according to that word, Song 5. 2. *I am wet, saith he,
 with the dew of the morning, and my locks with the dew of
 the night;* He was long knocking at her heart; and stay-

ed a long time there patiently suffering all the injuries he could meet with. And I would only pose you think ye that if one of the richest of you were suiting a very poor woman, and she refused you so many times would your proud hearts submit to take her; and yet how oftentimes hath the precious heart of Christ submitted to so many affronts, and refusals that we have given him; I think if it were possible, Christians would wink, when first they behold Christ upon the day of their espousals; For, I suppose there will be great dispute between shame and love, desire and confusion; shame will make you close your eyes, because you have oft-times undervalued that Prince, and yet love will not let you close them, desire will put you to look, though reflecting upon your former ways will make you blush and be ashamed.

Thirdly, To perswade you to receive Christ in the offer of his free promises, I shall but say these three words and close. 1. Look to these excellent gifts that Christ bringeth with him, he bringeth Justification with him, and is not that an excellent gift. He bringeth Sanctification with him, and is not that an excellent gift? He bringeth joy of the holy Ghost with him, and is not that an excellent gift? He bringeth the love of God with him, and is not that an excellent gift? He bringeth patience under sufferings with him, and is not that an excellent gift? but why should I name what he bringeth? He bringeth himself and all things, and what would you have more? O but for one saving blink of his face, it would make your hearts lay down your enmity that you have maintained so long. 2. O, Christian, that ye may close with Christ, do but remember the happiness that ye will have in embracing him. I told you not long since, and now I put you in mind again: There is a sixth fold Crown which shall be put upon your head; Would you have long life? then come to Christ, and ye shall have a Crown of eternal life: Would ye have glory: then come to Christ, and ye shall have a crown of Glory: Would

Would ye have knowledge of the mysteries of God? then come to Christ, and he shall crown you with knowledge: Would ye have an eternal felicity, and an uninterrupted happiness; then come to Christ, and ye shall have an immortal Crown: would ye have holiness and sanctification? then come to Christ, and ye shall have a Crown of righteousness? yea, he shall put a royal Crown upon your head, a Crown of pure gold; and then that word shall be accomplished to the full, *Ezek. 9. 16. Then shall they be, as the stones of a Crown lifted up, and be an ensign upon the land.* O when will ye think ye it will be, when Christ shall hold your Crowns upon his hand, and shall put them upon those heads never to be removed again here we are often out to sigh out that lamentation; *The Crown is fallen from our heads, we unto us for we have sinned*, but there shall be no more sin to make our Crown to totter. 1. I must tell you, There is a fourfold suit of apparel that ye shall be clothed with ere long; ye are now clothed with *heaviness*, but then ye shall be clothed with the Garments of Praise; And did ye ever know such a Robe as that? Is it not a more excellent Robe, than the robes of Kings and Emperors in the Earth, to be clothed with Praises? Many of them are, and shall be for ever clothed with infamy and shame. 2. Ye shall be clothed with change of raiment, and shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needle work. O poor Lads and poor Lads that sitteth upon the dung-hill, that knows not what it is to have change of apparel; ye shall have it in that day, when Christ shall Solemnize the Marriage with you, ye shall miken your self. O Christian, if ye knew your self never so well, ye will be forced to cry out! O, *Is this I? is this I? that am now made perfect through his conliness.* 3. Ye shall be clothed with the garments of immortal Glory, ye that have your foundation in the dust, and dwell in the houses of clay, ye shall then be clothed with these excellent Robes of immortality, and clothed upon with your house from Heaven. And lastly, Ye shall be clothed with the

Garments of the spotless righteousness of Christ. O such a Majestick walk as ye will have, when ye shall have a Scepter in one hand, and a palm in the other, these Robes put upon your back, and these Crowns upon your heads, and then shall be walking through these streets that are paved with Gold. 4. I shall give you this word to think upon, that there are five things that shall be your exercise in Heaven; 1. Ye shall be constantly taken up in wondering: If it be not presumption for us to think a little; What is the exercise of Christ, and the Saints that are above, we conceive it to be this, Christ is wondering at their beauty, and they are wondering at his beauty, Christ is looking upon them, and they upon him; and is it not true, that if Christ be now ravished with one of our eyes, *Song 4. v. 9.* much more shall he be ravished when both our eyes shall be given to him, and shall eternally behold him, without going a whoring after other lovers. 2. Ye shall be continually in the exercise of praise, joy, and delight shall be flowing out eternally; ye shall then sweetly warble upon these Harps of God, and shall cry, *Hallelujah unto him that sitteth upon the Throne*: There shall be no discord there: there is a sweet and beautiful harmony amongst all these spiritual and heavenly Musicians: O but to hear them it were a Heaven, though we had not that blessed Lot as to sing with them. 3. Ye shall be continually taken up in the exercise of Love; Faith is your predominant grace while ye are here, but Love shall be your predominant grace when ye are there. O! Is it not a mystery to take up these sweet emanations of Love and Delight, that shall pass between Christ and you? ye shall be infolding Christ, and Christ shall be infolding you. 4. Ye shall be continually beholding him. I think it is hardlie possible for the Wife to remember her Husband in Heaven, through she loved him as her own heart, they will all be taken up in beholding him that sitteth upon the Throne, they will be thinking it too low an object to be taken up with looking upon another

her in these relations : all will be ravished beholding
 in, and one another in him, and for him, O the
 blessed exercise of these that are now entered within
 the City, and within these gates, whose Name is
 Jesus. 5. Ye shall be continually taken up in behol-
 ding, ye shall be always knowing, and yet never able
 to comprehend the endless mysteries and perfections
 of Jesus Christ. O such a study ? Is it not pleasant al-
 ways to be studying Christ ? and will not these things
 persuade you ?

And now but a word more to these that will not
 take this free offer : If ye will not embrace Christ and
 take him let me tell you, I would not be in the stead
 of that person for ten thousand worlds, if ye would not
 embrace Christ, and take him for your portion, the
 sons of the wall of this house will bear witness against
 you and they shall have a tongue to speak against you,
 that ye have been invited to take him, and would not :
 ere long that day is approaching and drawing near
 when the atheists and refusers of Christ, they shall
 change their Faith and they shall change their Fear,
 and they shall change their Joy, and they shall change
 their Mind, ye shall change your Faith, ye that are
 refusers of Christ ; for I know there are many that
 think they have closed with Christ, who never did
 close with him ; that Faith shall flee away, and ye shall
 believe the contrary : ye shall change your love, or at
 least your opinion of your love : ye think ye love
 Christ but ye do not embrace him ; I will tell you what
 will be your exercise, and I can tell you nothing so ter-
 rible, Christ shall eternally hate you, and ye shall eter-
 nally hate Christ, there shall be a mutual hatred betwixt
 you two evermore. O that dreadfull word, *Zech. 11* ?
8. it shall then be accomplished to the uttermost, My
soul loatheth them, and their soul also abhorreth me. And
 ye shall change your Fear, for now though ye fear not
 God, nor reverence man, yet the horreur of God shall
 make you shake as a leaf, and ye shall change your light
 and your Judgment. Ye do now undervalue Christ,

and thinks him of nothing worth; when Christ is presented unto you, there is no beauty why ye should desire him: But O think on that day when Christ shall sit down in the clouds, and ye shall see his beautifull face, every ray of which shall be able to captivate your hearts, if they were then capable to be ravished with the sight. O what will be your thoughts of him? and if the blessings of a crucified Saviour come not upon you, then the eternal, unsupportable vengeance of Christ shall light upon your heads, that would not condescend to take him: ye shall be cursed in your life, ye shall be cursed in your death, and ye shall be cursed after death; What say ye to it? Are ye content to take him? ye might bless the day that ever ye were born, if ye could once come to close with Christ. Now to him that hath the keys of the house of David, that can open your hearts to give him entry, we desire to give praise.

S E R M O N IV.

Deut. 1. 4. Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious Promises, that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

THere are three most glorious and excellent Gifts that God hath bestowed upon man, there is that comprehensive Gift of Heaven, Jesus Christ, who is so called, Job. 4. 19. and sure such a gift as that ought in some sence to blind our eyes, and make us to look upon all things that are below him, as nothing. The second royal gift that the Lord hath given, is the precious promises of the everlasting Covenant, which are given to us through him: a Christian that is united unto him by the bond of Faith, he may write this above the head of every promise of the everlasting Covenant *this is mine, and this is mine.* His third precious gift, is

the gift of Faith, which is that grace that maketh
 one of the former two : and we conceive that our little
 making use of these three excellent gifts, is the great
 occasion and cause why these four most sad and lamen-
 table evils have befallen us. 1. The evil of a silent con-
 science, that though *we be profound to commit iniquities*
and do love a reward under every green tree, yet our con-
 science doth not speak, nor reprove us, and if at any
 time they do speak, yet there are some that are so
 possessed with a dumb and deaf spirit, they can neither
 hear what God doth speak, nor can they hear their
 conscience. The evil of a fierce Rod, we know not
 the voice of our Rod, *and who is he that hath appointed it?*
 God doth not now open *our ears to Discipline, nor seal up*
our instruction. 3. There is that evil of silent mercies,
 the mercies that we receive of God, we understand not
 the language of them : are not our mercies Barbarians
 unto us, speaking to us in an unknown tongue ? and
 yet we may say, there is not a rod nor a mercie a
 Christian meets with, but it hath a voice, if we did un-
 derstand it. And lastly, there is that evil which hath
 befallen us; and alas this is the capstone of all, *a si-*
lent God, who doth not harken unto the voice of our
cries, but turneth about the face of his Throne, covering
himself with a cloud in his anger, so that our prayers cannot
pass through. Alas may not each Christian of this time
 cry out, *call me no more Naomi, but call me Mara, because*
the Lord hath dealt bitterly with me. In short I think
 there are these two things that may be our lamentation
 upon the high places of Israel, First That we live
 without sight of God. And Secondly, that we live
 without sight of ourselves, and all this, because we
 live without sight of these precious Gifts, Christ and
 his promises.

But now to the words, We told you, that in them
 there were these four things holden forth concerning
 the promises:

1. The Original and fountain of the promises; in that
 word, *Whereby or by whom.* 2. The properties of the
 promises,

promises, which we told you, were these Four. The first was, that the promises were free, holden forth in that word, they are *given*, all the promises of the everlasting Covenant being the Noble gifts of God. The *Second* (of which) we are to speak at this time is this, that the promises of the Covenant, they are *unchangeable*; which is imported also in that word, they are *given*, the gifts of God being indeed without repentance; And as to this, 1. We shall prove the Truth of the point, and for this end, consider that place Numb. 23. 19. which was a part of *Balaam's* song, *Hath he not spoken it, and will he not also do it? Hath he said it, and shall it not also come to pass?* and Psal. 89. 34. *I will not break my Covenant, nor alter the word that hath gone out of my mouth:* And the point is clear also, from the Name that the promises getteth in Scripture are they not called *the sure mercies of David*, Isai. 55. 3. And are they not sometimes in Scripture called *Truth*, as we may see from Micah 7. 20. *Thirdly*, The nature of the Covenant proveth it; in that it is called an *everlasting Covenant*, and sometimes a *Covenant of Salt*, because that Covenant is above the reach of alteration or putrefaction. And *Fourthly*, It may be likewise shown from the constant experience that the Saints have had of the unchangeableness of the promises. This *Joshua* taketh notice of, Chap. 23. 24. where when he was a dying. *There hath not failed* (saith he) *one thing of all the good things that God hath spoken;* and he is so confident of this, that he is forced to repeat that word over again in that verse, and he taketh notice of it, *Joshua* 24. 45. where he hath that same expression again, *There hath not failed* (saith he) *one thing of all the good things that God hath spoken unto us by Moses:* and indeed, there is near six Thousand years experience that preacheth this Truth, the promises are *unchangeable*, so that we may now say, *The word of the Lord is tried as silver is purified in a furnace of earth: but seven times.* If there had been any falshood in the precious promises of the everlasting Covenant, six thousand years tryal

shou'd

ould have brought it to light; but doth not every one of the Cloud of Witnesses that have gone before, leave this testimony upon record, *Faithful is he that promised, who will also do it, his promises is with the night and with the day.* It cannot be altered; the ordinances of heaven continue to this day, much less can this Covenant of Love be broken or altered, only we would have you taking this Caution by the way, that there are some conditional promises that God passeth unto his people, which in the depths of his spotless wisdom, he doth not accomplished unto these who never fulfil the condition; such was the promise that he gave to the Israelites in the land of Egypt, of their possessing the land of Canaan who yet died in the wilderness. And hence is that strange word, Numb. 14. 34. *Ye shall know my breach of promise, saith the Lord,* which is a word spoken after the manner of men, not importing any change of purpose in God, but only shewing that because they did not believe, and so fulfil the condition of the promise, therefore it was not to be fulfilled, personally to them.

The second thing that we shall speak to upon this that the promises are unchangeable, shall be to propose these six Golden pillars and excellent Foundations upon which the unchangeableness of the promises is built, and the first of them is, *the Omnipotency of God*, that there is nothing that he hath promised, but he is able to effectuate, and to bring to pass. Therefore, 2 Cor. 6. 18. when God had been passing many excellent promises, he strengthneth their Faith with this, *Thus saith the Lord God Almighty; and no doubt, Where the word of this King is, there is power, and who can say unto him, what dost thou!* O misbeliever of the precious promises of the Covenant; be ashamed to cast up your eyes to Heaven above, or to the earth beneath; we think the Stars, the Sun, the Moon, and all the works of God, they may speak out that to you, do not misbelieve God, but trust in him, *that is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.* The second is, *the wisdom*

wisdom and infinite counsel of God, he hath not only compleat ability to accomplish the promises that he hath given, but he hath the deeps and treasures of knowledge, by which he hath contrived the way of the accomplishment of such a promise : Hence is that word 2 Sam. 22. 5. That the Covenant is well ordered, which speaketh out the wisdom of God, and then that word is subjoyned, the Covenant is sure ; yea the Covenant of Grace is such a thing, that there is so much of the Act of Heaven, so much of the infinite Wisdom shining in it, that it is called the Counsel of God, Heb. 6. 17. *That ye might know the immutability of his counsel.* The third golden pillar is the infinite love of God, that though there be nothing in us, that can put him to accomplish the promises, yet he will take an argument from his own love, to make out such a promise to us : That there is sometimes (if not always) nothing in us, but that which may speak forth delays of the accomplishment of the promises ; but when God can bring no argument from us, he can bring an argument from his own love, as Deut. 7. 7, 8. where giving a reason of the accomplishment of many promises, and of his love to them, *I loved you, saith he because I loved you* ; there being no reason that can be given for love, but love. The fourth is, *The unchangeableness of the promise* that he is the same, yesterday and to day, and for ever, and without all alteration and shadow of change. Hence ye may see, Exod. 3. 14. when God is repeating many precious promises unto Moses, He (as it were) strengthneth Moses Faith with this, *I am saith he, that I am*, which we conceive to point forth the unchangeableness of God, that what he hath said, he will certainly accomplish in its own time, and though the vision do carry, yet at last it shall speak. The fifth is, *the faithfulness of God*, and that he is one that cannot lie, but certainly will make out what he hath spoken. Love, it maketh the promises, the Faithfulness and Power of God accomplisheth the promises, and the Infinite Wisdom of God, chooseth the most fit time for the performing

forming of them, Hence it is said, Psal. 119. 89, 90. *That word O Lord, is for ever settled in heaven, and the ground of it is in the following verse; For thy faithfulness is unto all generations.* Hence you may see that oftentimes when God is making promises to his own, he putteth to that word, *I that speaketh in righteousness.* Isai. 55. and Isai. 63.

1. O! must not the promises be unchangeable, that are made by the Father, who is the God of Truth. Must not the promises be unchangeable, that are received and merited by the Son, that is Truth it self, and the faithful witness, and Amen? Must not the promises be unchangeable, that are applyed by the Holy Ghost, that is *the Spirit of Truth*? And must not the promises be unchangeable, that are made known unto us by the Gospel, that is *the word of Truth*? Was there ever any who could leave that upon record of God, that he was unfaithful in the accomplishment of his promises? O! what a clear sight of the Faithfulness of God, shall a Christian get, when he shall be standing upon the outmost Line between Time and Eternity? Then he will see GOD Faithful in accomplishing all his Promises unto him, from first to last.

The last golden pillar is, *the Justice of God*? His Justice, it now putteth him to accomplish his promises mercy and righteousness have now kissed each other: Hence is that word, 1 John 1. 9. *He is just and faithful to forgive*; So that now the accomplishment of the promises is not only an Act of Love, but it is an Act of justice also. We confess indeed; Love and Mercy maketh the Promises, but Justice and Truth also putteth GOD to the accomplishment of them, Hence is that word Micah 7. 20. *To perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham.* Why is it mercy to Abraham, and it is Truth to Jacob? It is in short this, because Mercy made the promises to Abraham, but Truth did accomplish the promises to Jacob.

The third Thing that we shall speak to from this; That

That the Promises are unchangeable, shall be, to press these six duties upon you from this point.

O! Christians and expectants of Heaven, who have Christ in you, the hope of Glory, rejoyce and be exceedingly glad that the promises are unchangeable. This is a duty that is pressed from that ground, Heb. 6. 18, *That by two immutable things we might have firm consolation.* There is exceeding much Joy that may come to a Christian from this, that the promises shall be accomplished in their own time. We conceive that the word unchangeable, it is engraven upon the hearts of many a Christians mercies. Is not *unchangeable* written above the head of your promises? Is not *unchangeable* written upon the head of your blessedness? Is not *unchangeable* written above the head of our enjoyment of God? That day is coming, when we shall have *unchangeable* love, *unchangeable* enjoyment of God, and all things *unchangeable*. And we conceive, that if these two were believed, the Truth of the Promises, and the unchangeableness of the Promises, a Christian might walk through this Valley of Tears with joy, and comfort himself in hope.

The second Duty we would press, is this, That ye would surcease, and give over your disputings, and carnal reasonings, about the accomplishment of the promises. Since the promises of God are unchangeable, ought not we with this, to silence misbelief, and all that blind humane reason can say? This is pressed Heb. 6. 16. *An oath for confirmation, is an end of all strife.* Gods confirming of his Covenant by an Oath, it ought to cut short the disputings of misbelief. And here give me leave to point out a little these grounds, upon which it is that Christians do so much dispute the accomplishment of the promises, and to let you see how all these things may be answered, from these six pillars that were given of their unchangeableness.

The first is, when Dispensations do seem to contradict the Truth of the promises, the Promise it speaketh one thing, and Dispensations seemeth to speak another; and

Is this the occasion that oftentimes a Christian cryeth, *Doth his promise fail for evermore?* This is clear from the practice of David, 1 Sam. 27. 1. When dispensations were upon the top of the accomplishment and truth of the promises, then misbelief, it ariseth as a champion mighty to war, and cryeth out, *I shall one day fall by the hand of Saul*: And we conceive, that dispensations contradicting the truth of the promises, was the occasion of his speaking that word, Psal. 116. 11, *Did in my haste all men are liars*. And I would only say to you that dispute the Truth of the promises, upon this account, that dispensations contradicteth them. But consider this, God in his ways is not like unto you. Would ye know the time when the promises are nearest their accomplishment? Is it then, when we can least see that they are to be accomplished. The promises are never nearer their performances than when we think they are farthest off from it; And therefore let the faith of the Omnipotency of God, uphold your spirit under such a debate: Then let dispensations speak what they will, ye may answer all with this, *There is nothing too hard for him*, there is nothing too hard for the Lord. I grant this may try the strength of the Strongest Faith; yea we find it hath made the best stagger, when they had no probabilities to tell them that the promises shall be accomplished; this was the ground of *Sarab's* misbelief, Gen. 18. 12. That when she heard she should bear a son in her old age, she laughed within her self and did as it were, mock at such a promise. And this was the ground of *Moses's* misbelief, Numb. 11. 21, 22. he did not see a probability that such a multitude should be fed with flesh; and therefore he did call in question the truth of that promise. This was the ground of the misbelief of that Lord that is made mention of, 2 King. 7. 2. And this was the ground of *Zacharias's* misbelief, Luke. 1. 10. But I would say to you, that do so much consult with probability, in the exercise of your Faith, these two things.

1. There

1. There is nothing too hard for God: This was the very argument that God took to convince Sarah, in the 14. Verse of that 18. Chapter, *Is there any thing too hard for God?* And, 2. Faith is never in its native and spiritual exercise, till once probability contradict the truth of the Promise, then Faith it is put upon the Stage, then Faith doth Act; but as long as Faith and Probabilities think one thing, then the day of the Trial of the strength of Faith is not yet come.

The second ground upon which Christians dispute the accomplishment of the promises, is their much disputing of their Interest in God; sometimes a Christian will believe a promise, and before the accomplishment of the Promise come, their hope will be darkned, their interest in Christ will be obscured, and then they do quite their Faith in adhering to the Truth of that promise. These two are joyned together, want of the Faith of our Interest, and want of the Faith of the accomplishment of the promise; as is clear from that word, *Psal. 77. 8. Is his mercy clean gone?* There is disputing of his Interest, and presently this is subjoyned, *doth his promise fail for evermore?* Except a Christian can read his name in the ancient Records of Heaven, and can seal this conclusion, *I am my beloveds, and my beloved is mine,* it will be a hard and difficult Task for him, if not impossible to believe the promise.

The fourth ground of a Christians disputing the Truth of the Promises, is, their mistaking the way how the promises are to be accomplished; There are some that suppose, That when ever they close with a promise by Faith, there is no more but to enter into the possession of such a promise; but do not mistake it, between your believing the promise, and the accomplishment of it, there may be sad and dark days intervening, according to that word in *Mark 10. 30.* where Christ promising great Promises to his Disciples, He, as it were, doth add, *do not mistake me, that ye shall have these Promises without Trouble and Affliction, Ye shall receive (saith he) an hundred fold in this life with persecutions.*

Christian when he believeth the promises he must solve to have a winter before the spring time come, wherein the promise shall bud and flourish.

The fifth ground of a Christians disputing the Truth the promises, is, when the promises are long in their accomplishing. A Christian when first he meeteth with promise, he will cry forth, *O believe*. But when time taken for the accomplishment of it, then his Faith becometh to faint and his Hope beginneth to languish and give over. Yet sometimes Christians they fall into this fault, when they believe a promise they fix a day for the accomplishment of it; which, if God do not keep, they give over, then they immediatly cry forth, *What is my strength that I should wait? And what is my confidence that I should prolong my day?* This is clear in the practice of *Abraham*, where the promise of having a numerous seed being given to him, *Gen. 12. 2*. The long time before that promise was accomplished in part to him, was the occasion of his misbelief, that he vented, *Gen. 15. 3*. *O Lord, what wilt thou give me since I go childless?* But ye must know, That before the vision shall speak, there is an appointed time that ye must wait according to *1 Pet. 5. 9, 10*, *after ye have suffered a while, then the promises shall be accomplished, and ye shall be made perfect.*

The sixth ground upon which Christians call in question the accomplishment of the promises is, The consideration of the greatness of the thing that is promised, when they compare it with their own worth and deserving, then they begin to dispute, *O! shall such a thing be? Shall unworthy I, shall sinful I, shall self-deny-destroying I, shall I that am less than the least of his mercies, receive the accomplishment of such a mercy?* This we may suppose was one ground of *Abrahams* misbelief *Gen. 17. 17* when he cryed forth at that same time, when the Lord was giving him the excellent promise of an *Isaac*, *O that Ishmael might live*, he thought an *Isaac* such an excellent mercy, That he could not without presumption, expect the accomplishment of that promise

promise. And in *Zech. 8. 6.* This was the ground of their misbelief, which God doth sweetly obviat, *if it be wonderfull in the eyes of the remnant of his people in these days, should it also be wonderfull in mine?*

The last ground on which a Christian disputes the accomplishment of the promises, is, when in the time between their believing, and the accomplishment of the promise, they fall into some gross iniquity: This maketh them exceedingly debate, whether the promise shall be accomplished unto them, for since they have transgressed the Covenant of God, and have broken their purposes and resolutions, they cannot suppose God will abide Faithful to them; and once accomplish his promise to them. And the only way how to answer this dispute, is to look to the Faithfulness of God, and use that word, *2. Tim. 2. 13. Though we believe not, yet God doth abide faithful, he cannot deny himself.*

And now to shut up this second Duty that we press from the unchangeableness of the promises; - I shall only say these two words unto you, 1. Assure you selves of this. That these accomplishments of the promises that come not through the lively exercise of Faith, doth lose much of their sweetness, much of their luster, and of their advantage: sometimes a promise will be accomplished unto a Christian, when he hath not been much in the constant and lively exercise of Faith in believing such a promise; but then the disadvantages that attendeth such a one, are not easily expressed: how often may he cry out, *The Lord was in this place, and I was not aware?* How little of God doth he see in it? How short is he in praises and rendering to the Lord according to the good he hath received? How negligent in improving or keeping the mercy, and how loath to lay it out for God, when he seeth, *the Lord hath need of it:* and many things more of this kind, which may press us to be steadfast in believing. And 2. O! dispute less, and believe more. What Profit shall you have of your disputings? And if ye would produce all your strong Arguments, why ye should not believe

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the promises? Ye may drown them in this immense depth. God is unchangeable. Let me say but this further ere are three most remarkable changes in a Christian, in his making use of the promises: First, sometimes he will believe the promises, and make application of them, and ere many hours go about, he will misbelieve that promise which presently he believed. Will not sometime a Christian in the morning cry out, *I am my beloveds, and my beloved is mine?* And ere Twelve hours come, they will change their note, and cry out, *my hope and my strength is perished from the Lord.* Sometimes a Christian in the morning will cry out *my Mountain standeth strong, shall never be moved;* and ere many hours go about, he will change his note, and cry out, *Thou hast hid thy face from me and I was troubled.* Secondly, sometimes a promise will be to a Christian *sweeter than the honey comb;* sometimes a Christian will die and live upon the promise; Sometimes the believing of a promise, will be to a Christian *as the vally of Achor, a door of hope.* That will make him to sing and yet ere many days go about, he may come to that same very promise, and it will prove *Tassless to him as the white of an egg;* so that he may cry out, *O! that it were with me, as in months past, and in the ancient times:* And O! where is the sweetness that I found in such a promise? O! it is gone, it is gone, and I am left desolate. Thirdly, Sometimes when a Christian will be believing such a promise, and resting upon it, he will (through the Spirit of the Lord) see much light and clearness in that promise, he will take up the *deep things of God* that shined therein; and at another time he may come to that same promise, and it may be dark to him, so that his light hath vanished: and sometimes the joy of a Christian in the promise will be gone, when his light that he had in it, may remain with him. A Christian may come to the promise, and find his ancient light, yet not his ancient joy, nor his ancient delight. Therefore, if ye would have the promises always sweet unto you, pray over them, pray that

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God might breath upon such a promise, and make it lively unto you.

The third thing that we would press upon you from the unchangeableness of the promise, is that which by proportion ye may gather even from this, that the threatnings of God are *unchangeable*: these two are conjoyned; yea, *Joshua* seemeth to infer the unchangeableness of the Threatnings, from the unchangeableness of the promises, *Chap. 23. 14.* compared with *verse 15.* and these two are conjoyed. *Zech. 8. 14. 15.* *That as I thought to punish you, and it hath come to pass, so I have thought to build you up, and it shall come to pass.* And I would from this, desire you to stand in awe, lest you come under the lash of unchangeable threatnings of God; for know, That as God is unchangeable in the promises, and there is not one word in all the everlasting Covenant that shall not be accomplished; so likewise know, there is not a Curse in all the Book of the Covenant but it shall be accomplished in its time: And know this likewise, That the day is coming, when that sad word that is in *Hos. 7. 12.* shall be accomplished, *I will chastise them as their congregation hath heard.* And O! ye that live in this place, if all the Threatnings that your Congregations hath heard, shall be accomplished in their time, ye may take up the last words of *Balaams* song, alas! *Who shall live when God shall do all these things!* And therefore since the Threatnings of God are unchangeable, as also the promise, Life and Death is set before you: and either ye shall be the Object of the unchangeable Threatnings of God; or ye must be the Object of the unchangeable promises of God: And therefore, I would from this charge you, that as you would not be helpfull to the destruction of your own immortal souls, you would not undervalue the threatnings that ye hear in your Congregations since there is a declaration past, that the Threatnings in your Congregations shall be accomplished.

Now there is that fourth Duty that we would press upon you from this, That the promises are unchange-

we have an unchangeable love to the Promiser; let us commend the Promiser, let this constrain your heart to delight in the Promiser. O what a blessed dispensation of love is this, That an unchangeable God should make unchangeable promises unto changeable creatures? If the promises of the Covenant of Grace were as changeable in their nature, as we are changeable, there should not one of us go to Heaven; but know it is the blessed design of love, and it hath been a blessed practice of the infinite wisdom of God, that when he hath to do with changeable creatures, he will give them unchangeable promises. And I would once invite you again, that you would come near and embrace this *unchangeable Promiser*; I shall speak these five words that may pervade you. 1. Christ is easily to be gotten, if ye will but take him: ye will get Christ if you will but hear, yea, for one listening of your ear to his voice, ye shall get him; according to that word, Isa. 55. 31: *Hear, and what of that? and your souls shall live.* Is not this to get Christ at an easie rate? And as we spake before, ye will get Christ for a look, and is not that an easie rate? Isa. 45. 22. *Look unto me all ye ends of the earth and be saved.* Have ye a desire to take Christ? Ye shall get him for that desire; according to that word, Isa. 55. 1: *Ho, everyone that thirsteth let him come, and he that will let him come.* Will ye but consent to take him, ye shall have him and what can ye have at a lower rate than this? Shall never your cursed hands take the Pen, and put to your name to the blessed Contract of Marriage? Shall never these cursed hearts of yours cry forth, *Ever so I take him*, and do promise to live to him, and to die to him. O strange? will ye not do it? Upon what Terms would the world have Christ? Is it possible to have him without a consent to take him? Oh! If ye would but open to him, he would Condescend to come in unto you, and sup to with you, and ye with him. Do ye but stir to open, Christ hath the Keys in his own hand, and he will help you to open. O! what if Christ the precious Gift of Heaven, the eternal admiration of Angels, that Branch of

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of Righteousness shall be dispised; being offered upon so easie Terms? Then cursed eternally, shall be the person that thus undervalueth Christ, it had been better for him that he had never been born; cursed shall ye be in your birth, and in your life, and in your death; all the curses of the Persons of the Trinity will light upon you, yea, believe it. O! Wife, that hath a believing Husband, in the day that the great Sentence of eternal Excommunication from the presence of the Lord, shall be past against the undervaluers of Christ, a believing Husband will say Amen to that Sentence, even to his Wife that did thus undervalue that noble Plant of Religion; and the Wife upon the other part, will say with hearty consent, Amen, to that Sentence, against the unbelieving Husband; and the Father to the son, and the Son to the Father.

Now there is this fifth duty, that we would press upon you from this, That the promises are unchangeable, that ye would be perswaded to make the promises your Portion, and your Inheritance. What can ye want that will choise the promises for your Portion? I know your cursed eyes doth not love to make invisible promises, and that invisible Crown, and an invisible God or Portion, we love to walk by sight, not by Faith. But Oh! if you know once what it were but to Claim a relation to Christ? Did you once know what it were to have but Christ a moment between your Breasts, ye would cry forth, O! *Who would not love him who is the King of Saints?* O! Who would not be content to quite all things, that they might get Christ that noble Pearl of price?

And there is this last duty that we would press upon you from this, that the promises are unchangeable; read a Lecture from this, O! Christians even your misbelief. God hath confirmed this everlasting Covenant with an oath, with the blood of his Son by the two great broad Seals of Heaven, the Sacrament of baptism, and the Lords Supper: And what doth all these Confirmations speak? but a dreadful misbelief: And that we know not what it is.

to be resting on a naked word of Promise. I shall say no more, but desire that ye would consider and take notice of these three: First, ye have been solemnly and often invited by the Ambassadors of Christ to close with Him, and to take Him for your Husband and your Lord: and will you consider presently, That all the Angels in Heaven, and all that are about the Throne, and the three most glorious, most blessed persons of the Trinity, that they are Witnesses, and shall be to your dissent, and are there not many here whose hearts could never be brought up to give a hearty consent to close with Christ, that is the great Promiser? and who hath laid all the bonds that Heaven or earth could contrive to gain sinners hearts to himself: O precious Christ, what could he do to persuade us to love him, which he hath not done; and yet that may be your name, which is in Ephes. 2. 2. *Children of disobedience*. Or as the Word is, *Children of Imperswasion*, we cannot be persuaded.

Secondly, I fear if Christ himself would come from Heaven and invite you, and say, here am I, I embrace Mr, there are some here who would close not only their eyes, but their ears, they would close their eyes, lest the beauty of Christ should allure them, they would close their cursed ears, lest they should be gained, and captivate by the sweet enchanting voice of that blessed Charmer, when he should charm so wisely. And lastly, will thou tell me O Christian, and expectant of Heaven, what a day shall it be when all the unchangeable promises of God shall be accomplished? What a day shall it be when that promise shall be accomplished, *Ye shall see him as he is*? What a day shall it be, when that promise shall be accomplished, *Ye shall be made like unto him*? What a day shall it be, when that promise shall be accomplished, *Ye shall know us ye are known*? O! Are ye not longing for the day of the full accomplishment of the precious promises of God, when ye shall sit down and comfort your selves in the eternal and unspeakable fruition of them? O! let us long and wait

wait till the day shall be when the voice shall be heard in Heaven, that *the mysteries of God are finished*, till the day when that voice shall be heard in Heaven, Behold *the Bridegroom cometh*, go ye out to meet him O ! how unwilling are ye to leave a World ? And how badly would we take up our rest on this side of Jordan ? I think, if this were the night that that blessed voice were to be heard in heaven, Behold *the Bridegroom cometh*, go ye out to meet him : some, if not many of the Christians (that are so indeed) in this time, would cry forth O ! spare a little, that we may recover strength, before we go hence and shall be no more, Are ye not longing to bring the King over Jordan and to bring him home to your self, and to have your heart brought home to him ? O blessed, blessed are those that are above, Is not the voice of those that shout for victory heard amongst them ? Is not the voice of these that sing for Joy heard amongst them ? Job doth not now any more complain, Why dost thou make me to possess the iniquities of my youth and settest a print upon my heels ? David doth now no more complain, why dost thy Promises fail for evermore ? But rather doth sweetly sing, How is thy promise fulfilled for evermore ? Heman doth now no more complain, while I suffer thy terrors I am distracted ; but rather cry out, While I feel thy comforts I am ravished. The voice of mourning is now sweetly gone away ; and the voice of Hallelujah and of eternal Praising of him that sitteth upon the throne, is now heard in the place of it. O Such a day that shall never admit of a following night. Now to him that is upon his way, that will come, and shall come, and shall not tarry, we desire to give praise.

S E R M O N . V.

2 Pet. 1. 4. *Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious Promises, that by these you might be partakers of the Divine Nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*

T Here are three cardinal and excellent Graces that are exercised and taken up with the precious pro

promises: there is this excellent grace of Faith, that believeth the truth and the goodness of the promise; there is the precious Grace of Hope, that with patience waiteth for the accomplishment of the promise, and doth stay until the Vision speak: and that noble grace of Love, That loveth the Thing that is promised? and taketh exceeding much delight in the Promise. If we may be allowed to speak so, we think these strange revolutions and times we live in, are another *ecclesiastes*, which doth fully Preach forth the vanity and emptiness of all things that are below God; and we do indeed, conceive that it is the great design of God, in the darkning of our pleasant Things, and in making every gourd to wither, under the shadow of which we use to repose our self, and in *satisfying all the goods of the earth*, to bring his own to delight themselves in this invisible treasure, *the Promises of the ever-lasting Covenant* and in him who is the substance of them; and that since all Things else are declared to be vanity, we might choose these as our own Portion for ever.

At the last occasion that we spake upon these words, we were speaking unto the properties of the Promise, and we told you that there were four of them holden forth; 1. *The freedom of the Promises.* 2. *The unchangeableness of the Promises*, of which Two we have spoken unto you. And now there remaineth other Two to be spoken to, to wit; That the promises are *exceeding great*, and that they are *exceeding Precious*; A sweet and excellent, though a rare conjunction, greatness and goodness here kissing one another, preciousness and highness linked together by the bond of Union; And we shall speak unto these two properties together, and shall clear a little this Thing, in what respects the promises of the Covenant may be called exceeding great and precious; and we conceive in short, they may be called so in these eight respects; 1. They are exceeding great, in respect of the great price that was laid down to purchase them, there not being a promise of the

everlasting Covenant, above the head of which this may not be engraven in great Letters, *Here is the Price and purchase of Blood*: and no doubt, this ought highly to commend the promises, that are bought at so infinite a rate. Must they not be great and precious Things? That so wise a Merchant did lay down so infinite a Treasure for the purchasing of them. 2. They may be called exceeding great and precious, in respect of these great and precious Things that are promised in them: Is not Godliness a great Thing, and this is within the bosom of a Promise. Is not Heaven and eternal enjoyment of God a great and precious Thing, and yet this is within the bosom of a promise? Is not the knowing of God as he is, our perfect conformity with God, our victory over Idols, great and excellent things, and yet all these are treasured up in the promises. 3. They may be called exceeding great and precious, in respect of the great advantage that redounds to a Christian through the enjoyment of them. The promises of the everlasting Covenant, (if so we may speak) are the Pensils that draw the draughts and lineaments of the Image of Christ upon the soul; it is the promise of the everlasting Covenant, by which we are changed from glory to glory, as it were by the Spirit of the Lord; and as Peter doth here speak, the promises are such things, whereby we are made partakers of the divine nature. 4. They may be called exceeding precious, in respect of that near relation that they have unto Jesus Christ, What are all the promises of the Covenant of Grace? Are they not streams and Rivolets that flow from Jesus Christ? Christ is the Fountain out of which all these promises do spring; and can this Fountain that is sweet in it self, send forth any bitter Waters? Must they not be precious things that have such a noble descent? As the Streams of love flowing out from the Father to the Son, and from him unto us, as the pouring out of ointment upon the head of Aaron, which ran down the head unto the skirts of his Garments.

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They may be called exceeding precious promises, in respect they, or rather Christ in them, are the object of precious Faith; What is the meat upon which Faith feedeth? Is it not upon the promises of the Covenant, and Christ the Kernel of them? What are these things that Faith taketh so much delight in, and is supported by; Is it not the promises of the Covenant? 6. They may be called exceeding precious, in that they are the Things that guideth and leadeth us to precious Christ. There is not a promise within the Book of the Covenant, but as it were, it cryeth forth with a loud voice, O! come to Christ. The promises are indeed the Star that leadeth us unto the house where Christ doth ly, and there is no access unto Jesus Christ, but by a Promise. Christ is to be found there, for he dwells within the bounds of the everlasting Covenant, and there he will Tryst with his people, and be found of them. And 7. They may be called exceeding precious, in respect that the Saints have found such sweetness and such unspeakable delight in the promises. Did not David find a great sweetness in the promises, when he cryeth forth, *The Word of thy mouth are better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.* Did he not find much sweetness in the promises when he was constrained to cry out, *thy Law is sweeter unto me than the honey and the honey comb.* David in a manner was put to a nonplus, to find out any suitable similitude and significant resemblance, to point out the sweetness of the promises; Though we may see the Christians of this Time in a spiritual Feaver, they have lost their spiritual Taste; so that we may say, if we may allude unto that word, 2 Sam. 19. 25. *I am this day fourscore years old, and cannot discern between good and evil, can thy servant taste what I eat, or what I drink?* They know not what it is to be overcome with the sweetness that is to be found in these excellent streams of divine consolation. Lastly. The promises may be called exceeding precious, in that the Saints have a high and matchless account of them: Hence that word

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here rendered precious, may likewise be rendered honourable; which speaketh forth, That there is nothing that hath so much of the esteem of a Christian as the promises. Would ye put wisdom, riches, or honour, or what ye will, in the ballance with the promises? They would cry forth, what should I profit to gain all these, if I lose the promises? We shall say no more of this, but that the promises are indeed that Apple, the eating of which, would make us in some respect, (and in humility be it spoken) as God, knowing good and evil; The promises are these Things that doth elevate the soul unto a divine conformity with God. And Oh! That this might be the Fruit of them. The promises are as cords let down to souls sinking in the miry clay, and in the horrible pit; Do but lay hold upon them, and ye shall undoubtedly be drawn up, and ye shall set your feet upon a rock, and order all your goings.

Now we come to speak of the third Thing in the words: which is the advantage and unspeakable gain that floweth to a Christian through the Promise, holden forth in these words, *That by him ye might be made partakers of the divine nature*; which words doth not hold forth, That there is any substantial change of our natures unto the Essence of God; but only it holds forth this, That the Soul that is taken up in believing of the promises, they arise unto a likeness and conformity to him in Holiness, Wisdom and Righteousness. And as these advantages that come to a Christian through the Promises; 1. We must lay this for a ground, That the Fruit of all cometh to him through the believing of the promises, and in making application of them.

And the first is, That they do exceedingly help and promote that excellent necessary work of Mortification: This is clear from the words of the Text; as likewise from 2 Cor. 7. 1. *Having these Promises dearly beloved, let us cleanse our selves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.* And the influence that the promises have upon Sanctification

may be shewn unto you in these three. First, they lay upon a Christian, a divine Bond and obligation to study Holiness, that since Christ hath sanctified and testified his respects unto us, in so ample and large a way, as to give us such precious Promises, we ought to endeavour to study Holiness, which is that great reward of Love, that he seeketh from us, for all things that he hath bestowed, and we receive; and this is the meaning of that, 2 Cor. 7. 1. Secondly, the Strength and furniture of a Christian for fulfilling, and accomplishing the work of Sanctification, lyeth in the Promises. Are not the promises of God unto a Christian, as *Sampson's* Locks in which their great strength doth ly? And if once they cut themselves off from the promises through misbelief, their strength doth decay, and they become as other men. Where must the Christian go to for strength? Is it not to the promises? Is it not to the name of the Lord? Yea, this is the strength of a Christian, unto which he must resort continually. And thirdly. The promises of God, they hold forth that unspeakable reward that attendeth that Christian, that shall study Holiness. There are several promises of the everlasting Covenant, that cryeth forth to the Christian, to him that overcome, will this promise be accomplished, to him that overcome, will this Truth be fulfilled; and this doth exceedingly provoke a Christian to wrestle with all his discouragements he meeteth with in the way, he surereth all his anxieties within the circle of his immortal Crown, which he hopeth for, and seeth in the promise, and his hope maketh him dispencc with his wants, his expectation maketh him overcome his fears, and his looked for joy, maketh him to dispencc with his sorrows.

The second advantage is, That the Faith of the promises do help a Christian to a spiritual and heavenly performance of the duty of prayer, and withall, maketh him delight in the performance of it: This is clear from 2 Sam. 7. 27. where *David* believing the

promises, it is subjoynd, *He found in his heart to pray that prayer unto God*; and if any will look unto the words of that prayer, they will see them running in a heavenly and spiritual strain, speaking of him as one much acquainted with God, and under most high and majestic apprehensions of his glory; and is clear also *Psal. 119. 147. I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cryed*; and as if David had said, would ye know what made me thus fervent, diligent in prayer? It was that, *I hoped in his word*: And hence it is that he hath so many Prayers in that psalm, all were occasioned through the Faith of the promises; as for instance, when he cryeth forth *Quicken me according to thy word, be merciful unto me according to thy word*.

We conceive, the faith of the promises helpeth a Christian in his prayer to these four divine ingredients of that duty. 1. It maketh him to pray with Faith; when once he buildeth his prayer upon the promises, then he ventureth his prayer with much confidence of hope, according to that word *Psal. 65. 3. where ye may see a man believing, and praying when he is believing, and expressing his confidence most strangely in these words, As for our transgressions thou shalt purge them away*; it is not said, *thou wilt purge them away* but *thou shalt*, which speaketh forth both the confidence of Faith, and the boldness of Faith. A Christian that believeth the promises, he can take the promise in his hand, and present it unto God, and say, fulfill this promise, since thou wilt not deny thy Name, but art Faithful. 2. It maketh a Christian pray with much humility; for when he doth understand, that there is nothing that he hath but it is the Fruit and accomplishment of a promise, he doth not boast as those that have received, but walketh humbly under his enjoyments: This is clear, *Gen. 31. 10. where we may see Jacob speaking to God with much humility*; and in the ninth verse he is speaking to God in much Faith. And 3. It maketh a Christian pray with much Love: would ye know the great ground that we are so remiss in the exercise of Love in Prayer? It is, because we

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ould not our Prayers upon the Promises. And 4. It helpeth a Christian to pray with much fervency; when as it that *David* cryed to God? Was it not when he was believing the promise that was past to him of old, we would not plead with God with such remissions, if we did believe the promises that are within the Covenant.

The third advantage is, That the Faith of the promises doth sometimes uphold a Christian under his spiritual Desertions and Temptations. Is it not certain, That sometimes he hath been ready to draw that conclusion, *I am cast out of his sight, and shall no more behold him in the land of the living?* When a promise that hath been born in upon his spirit, hath supported him, and made him to change his song, and to invert his conclusion. This is clear from *Psal. 94. 18* When I said, *my foot slippeth*, there is the conclusion of misbelief and despair; yet *thy mercie, O Lord, did hold me up*, there is the gate at which Faith doth bring in consolation; not from bygone experiences only, but certainly from that which he found in some precious promises that was born in upon his spirit. Many excellent cords of love hath Christ let down unto a Soul, when they have been going down into the depths, and the weeds have been wrapt about their heads: It is clear likewise from *Psal. 119. 81. My soul fainteth for thy salvation*: as if *David* had said, I am in hazard to give over my hope, and to break my confidence: And would ye know what was it that supported me under such an estate, *I hoped in thy word*; Hath not this oftentimes been the song of a Christian in their darkest night, *In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts do delight my soul*: Faith will see a morning approaching in the time of the greatest trouble, and no doubt, That promise that upholdeth a Christian in their doubting and most misbelieving condition, the lively impressions of that promise will remain a long time; and when first it is born in upon their spirits, they will see no small love shining forth, in carving out such a promise to

suit with such a providence, as they are (it may be meeting with for the time.

The fourth advantage in believing the promise, is that thereby we have an excellent help to patience and divine submission under our saddest outward afflictions. This is clear from Psal. 37. 13. *I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the Land of the living:* and from Psal. 119. 49, 50. where David telling his exercise in the 49. I *hope*, saith he, in thy word. Immediately he subjoyneth, *This is my comfort in my afflictions*, as if he had said, if I had not had the promise to be my comforters, I had sit alone and kept silent, and should have remained without comfort in the day of my adversity: And verse 92, *Unless thy Law had been my delight, I should have perished in my affliction*. And we conceive in short, the Influences which Faith upon the promises, hath upon the patient bearing of the cross, may be shown unto you in these two particulars. First, Faith is an excellent Prophet, that always prophesieth unto us good Things. Would you enquire at Faith at your midnight of affliction, what is its opinion of God, and of your own estate? Faith would sweetly resolve you thus, *Wait on God, for I shall yet praise him for the health of his countenance*. Faith knoweth not what it is to have a wrong construction of God; and therefore it is the noble interpreter of a Christians cross. If sense, reason and misbelief interpret your cross, they will make you cry out unto God, *Why art thou become unto me, as an enemy, or as a liar, or as waters that fail?* But if Faith that noble Interpreter, do interpret your crosses, it will make you cry out, *I know the thoughts of his heart, that they are thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give me an expected end*. Faith letteth a Christian see a blessed outgate and issue of all the sad dispensations that he meeteth with: Faith that is its divinity, *I sow in tears, but I reap in joy: weeping it may be at the evening, saith Faith, but joy shall come in the morning*. Secondly, it affordeth unto a Christian such soul refreshing consolation in the midst of their afflictions, that in a manner, they

ye forget their sorrows, as waters that pass away: this would doth divinely assert, in Psal. 119. 50. *This is my comfort in my affliction.* The Faith of the promises are indeed that Tree, which being cast into our waters of tribulation, they will make them immediately become sweet.

The fifth advantage is, That the Faith of the promises doth help a Christian to a greater distance with the world and to live as a Pilgrim, as is clear from Heb. 11. 13. where these two are sweetly linked together, here is the embracing of the promises by Faith, and confessing that they were strangers and Pilgrims here on earth. And we shall show the influence that Faith hath upon this, in these Three; 1. It maketh a Christian see the end of all perfection here, and that there is nothing within the Glob of the world, that is not vanity and vexation of spirit. Faith is that prospect, through which a Christian hath most clear discoveries of the vanity of all things, and this doth exceedingly help him to live as a Pilgrim. 2. It letteth a Christian see the endless perfections of Heaven, and bringeth it within sight of the immense and everlasting hope, and this maketh him to live as a Pilgrim, and to declare plainly that he *seeketh a country*. And 3. It doth help him exceedingly forward in that blessed work, of weaning off affections from all things that are here; would ye know where a believers heart is? It is in heaven; Would ye know where his Thoughts are? They are in Heaven. Would ye know where his Conversation is? It is in Heaven. Would ye know where his Hope is? It is in Heaven; his Treasure is in Heaven, and therefore his Heart and Conversation is there, *And Christ in him is the hope of glory*. And indeed, more Faith of the Promises, would constrain us all to subscribe that *Confession of Faith*, that is in Heb. 11. 13.

The sixth advantage that attendeth the believing of the Promises is, That it is the mother of much spiritual joy and divine consolation, and maketh a Christian to be much in the exercise of praise; This is clear from

*Psalm. 71. 14. But I will hope continually; and then immediately is subjoyned, And will yet praise him more and more. As likewise from Rom. 15. 13. and from 1 Pet. 3. 8. If a man would have his way to Heaven made pleasant, and while they are sitting by the Rivers of *Babel* would be admitted to sing one of the songs of Zion, then ought they to believe the Promises, and choose them as their heritage for ever; and then he may sing in hope and praise in expectation, though he have but little in hand for the present: indeed when he looketh to his possession, there will not be so much matter of rejoicing, but when he looketh upon his hopes and expectations, he may be constrained to cry forth, *Awake O my glorie, I my self will awake earlie.**

The seventh advantage is that the Faith of the promises is a notable mean to attain unto Spiritual Life: This is clear from *Isa. 38. 16. By all these things saith *Ezekiah*, do men live, (speaking of the Promises) and in all these things is the life of my spirit. As likewise from *Psalm. 119. 50. Thy word saith *David*, hath quickned me.* O! what spiritual and divine life doth attend that Christian that is much in the exercise of Faith upon the Promises? and what is the great occasion that our hearts are oftentimes dying within us like a stone, and we are like unto those that are free among the dead? Is it not because we do not make use of the Promises?*

Eightly. There is that advantage, that Faith of the promises, it maketh a Christian have an esteem of the thing that is promised, What is the reason that we write this above the head of the great things of the everlasting Covenant, *this is a Zeal, a little one*? Is it not because we do not believe? Great things sometimes to us have no beauty, and there is no comeliness that appeareth in them why they should be desired? but if we had so much Faith, as a grain of mustard seed, we would cry forth, *How excellent are these things that are purchased to the Saints, and how eternally are they made up that have a right but of one line of the everlasting Covenant, that it well ordered in all things, and sure?*

And

And ninthly. The Faith of the promises is the door which the accomplishment of the promises doth enter in: according to that word, Luke. 1. 45. *Blessed are they that believe, for there shall be a performance of these things that are spoken of the Lord unto them.* if we were more in waiting for the accomplishment of the promises, *The wisdom should speak, and should not tarry;* And no doubt, a mercy coming to us as the fruit and performance of a Promise will make it an exceeding refreshing thing. When a Christian getteth leave to sing that Song, which is in Isai. 59. 9. *Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will come and save us.* And when a mercy is the fruit and accomplishment of the promise, there is a beautiful luster and dye upon that mercy, which no Art could set on, but only the Finger of the Love of GOD. The smallest mercy then becometh a matchless mystery of Love, and the most matchless mysteries of Love without the exercise of Faith, they become as Things that are contemptible in our eyes, and we do not value nor praise them. Faith maketh our Thoughtes to ascend and misbelief maketh our Thoughtes to descend; in relation to the mercies of heaven.

Lastly, Besides all these advantages, we have these two mentioned in the Text, 1. That by them we are made partakers of the Divine nature, and are brought up unto that blessed conformity with God, which we had lost in the fall. 2. That by them we escape the corruption in the world through lust. I intend not particularly to open up the nature of these things at this time, because I am only to speak to the exercise of Faith in the Promises. But O what excellent mercies are these, to get on the beauty of the Image of God, and to get off these ugly defilements which were the Image of Satan upon our Souls. O! how should this commend the promises unto us? that by Faith in them we do all, *behold with open face, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, and are changed into the same Image, from glory to glory, as it were by the Spirit of the Lord.*

Now that which *secondly*, we shall speak to, shall be the Advantages, that result to a Christian from a spiritual Observation of the Lords accomplishing his promises; for here ye see in the Text, the Apostle makes an Observation of these excellent things that are the Fruit of these precious Promises, when they are accomplished. And the first advantage is, That it stampeth the Soul of a Believer with most divine Impressions of Love, this is clear, *I sa. 38. 15.* where *Hezekiah* cryeth out, *What shall I say, he hath spoken it himself, and hath done it?* being as it were, astonished and overcome with the apprehensions of the condescendency of GOD, he is put to a non-plus, and to, *What shall I say?* *Psal. 41. 8.* *As we have heard, (saith David) so have we seen in the City of the LORD of Hosts, that is according to his promise, we have had suitable performance; and he subjoyneth, verse 9. that which was both their exercise and their Advantage, We have thought of thy loving kindness, O GOD, in the midst of the Temple, as it were, the Observation of the performance of the Promise, made their thoughts wholly to be taken up with the love of God: and no doubt, there is more love in performing one promise, than eternity were sufficient to make a Commentary upon. It is one wonder of condescendency, that he should oblige and bind himself to us by promises: and another depth of wonderful love, that he should perform these Bonds, and answer his word with performance.*

The second advantage is, that the observing of accomplishment of Promises doth bring into the Soul new discoveries of God; this is clear, *Exod. 6. 51.* where God thus speaketh to *Moses*, *I was known (saith he) unto Abraham, and unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the Name of the Almighty, but by the Name of JEHOVAH was I not known to him, that is by the name of giving an accomplishment unto my Promises, that Name was not discovered unto them, but should be made known unto their posterity, in the day when his promises shall pass into performances; and hence it is also, that when the*
Lord.

ord is speaking of the accomplishment of great promises, he doth so often in Scripture subjoyn that word, *Ye shall know that I am JEHOVAH, or the LORD*, Isai. 43. 23, 52 and 60. 16. and indeed we daily find it is for, is not every accomplishment of a promise, a new discovery of the wisdom of GOD, that shineth in the admirable timing of the accomplishment of a promise? Is not every accomplishment of a Promise a new discovery of the faithfulness of God, that he will not alter that which hath gone out of his mouth, and is not every performance of the Promise a new discovery of the love of God, that he desireth to magnifie his mercies above all his works, and a new discovery of the power and omnipotency of God, that can bring forth the performance of his promise, notwithstanding of all the things that are in the way, yea, *maketh things that are not to be, and bringeth to nought things that are.*

The third advantage is, that it helpeth a Christian to have high apprehensions, and majestick uptakings of God; This is clear, 1 Tim. 1. 15. compared with verse 7. where Paul closing with that promise, *That Christ came in the world to save sinners*, and beholding the accomplishment of it, in himself, his heart (as it were) is elevated within him, and he cryeth forth. *Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever Amen.* There is an Emphasis in the word *Now*; as if Paul had said, I could never praise and extoll him till now, and I am so much bound to Christ, that I will not delay this exercise one moment, now I will blefs him; and it is clear from Ecclesiastes 7. 18 where the accomplishment of the Promises that are there, make the Church cry out, *Who is like unto thee?* he became matchless unto them, through the performance of the promises. And so we conceive that these who are much in spiritual observation of the performance of the promises, they will see precious thoughts of the Majesty of GOD engraven upon them, so that they will be constrained to cry out, that he above is Mighty, that his Name is JEHOVAH, and in him

Great and precious promises
is everlasting strength, upon which we ought to rely in
our greatest straits.

The fourth advantage is, the observation of the accomplishment of the promises will help a Christian when he is redacted unto new straits, to be much in the exercise of Faith upon God; his former experience will produce hope in his soul; for there is not one discovery of the faithfulness of God, but hath a voice, and cryeth out, *O believe him who is able to give a clear Being unto his word*, This is clear from Psal. 56. at the close, *Thou hast delivered my Soul from death*, saith David and then he subjoyneth *Wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling?* that is, I am certainly perswaded, thou wilt likewise perform that word unto me, and from Psal. 37. 2, 3. he giveth that Title unto GOD, *verse 2. that he performeth all things for him*, and then he doth subjoyn, *He shall send from Heaven and save me*, and (by the way) the Soul that can give GOD that Title and, stile, *that he performeth all things for them*, that Soul must of necessity be in a choise and excellent state; And the Point is likewise clear from 2 Cor. 1. 10. where Paul saith, *God hath delivered me, and he doth deliver me*, and from hence he draweth that conclusion of Faith, *And he will yet deliver me*; We confess sometimes our former experiences of the Faithfulness of GOD, they do not support our Faith when we are redacted unto new Difficulties, which is either occasioned through the greatness of the straits that we are now put to, (in our apprehensions) above that which we were put to before; so that though God did deliver us when we were running with foot-men, yet we have no Faith to believe that he shall deliver us when we are about to contend with horses: or else it is, through the unfaithfulness of our walk, in not answering the precious dispensations of Christ, in accomplishment of his promises, for this maketh us that we cannot with boldness make use of his Word when we are brought unto a new strait, a guilty conscience is the mother of misbelief.

The

The fifth Advantage is, The accomplishment of the promises doth occasion much spiritual joy, and rejoicing unto his own. We told you, the giving of the promises occasioneth joy, and when the Promise travelleth in Birth and bringeth forth, that occasioneth much more spiritual joy; this is clear from *Psal. 28. 7.* *The LORD is my strength and my shield, my heart trusted in him, and I was helped.* And he draweth this excellent conclusion from it, *Therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth, and with my soul will I praise him.* And we conceive, that sometimes, God trusteth the accomplishment of the promises with some precious manifestation of himself to the Soul, which maketh them to *rejoyce with joy unspeakable and full of glory*; but however this is the matter of a spiritual Song, *That mercy and truth have met together, and righteousness and peace are kissing one another*: is it not a pleasant matter of a song to behold Love making Promises, and to behold faithfulness accomplishing them. And the last is, That the Observation of the Accomplishment of promises, doth strengthen a Christians Faith in his interest in God, so that now many disputings are silenced, and many questions now are out of the way, this is clear, *Psal. 31. 21, 22.* *David* confesseth his quarreling before, but when once the LORD had shewed him *marvellous loving kindness in a strong Citie*, then all his quarrel was against himself, because he had quarrelled, and did say in his haste *I am cut off from before thine eyes.*

And now we shall only speak a little unto some duties that we would press upon you, from that which we have spoken; And the first duty is, that Christians would be much in waiting for the accomplishment of the promises; and standing upon their watch tower until the vision shall speak: and we shall only give you these to enforce it, it is commanded that you should so do, this is clear from *Psal. 27.* at the close: where *David* presseth that duty very much, *wait on the LORD*: saith he and if that be not enough, he will repeat that command in that same verse, *wait I say on the LORD*:
and

and no doubt, the doubting of it speaketh not only the Advantage that is in it, but our difficulty to obtain it and the great necessity that we have to go about it and that same word is repeated by David, *Psal. 31. Be of good courage*, which is that same, to wait upon the Lord.

2. These that wait patiently for the accomplishment of the Promises, God will strengthen them to wait, this is clear from *Psal. 27. at the close, wait on the Lord*; and when we are Hagar-like, casting away the Child of hope, he will open our eyes, and give us refreshment, by which we may be supported under our disquietment, *and he shall strengthen thine Heart*; And there is this, 3. There shall be a speedy accomplishment of the Promises, it is not long before all the mercies that ever the LORD hath promised, and thou hast believed shall be told down to you, as it were in one sum, *principal and interest*; as is clear from *Heb. 2. 3.* where he positively asserteth, *that the vision will come, and will not tarry*. There is indeed a pleasant seeming contradiction in that *verse*. he had said before, *then the vision would tarry*, and yet here he saith, *that the vision will not tarry, but will surely come*, in which ye may see the Divinity both of *Sense* and *Faith*, and that noble contradiction that is between their assertions, *sense* asserteth, that the promise doth tarry too long, and *faith* crieth out, it will surely come, it will not tarry, which is set down, *2 Pet. 3. 9. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise.* 4. Promises that come unto us through the most strong and lively exercise of Faith, and that are expected and longed for by us before they come, they are most relishing and sweet, and those mercies come unto us with a binding eye of Love: this is somewhat pointed at in *Isa. 25. 9.* where the Church crieth forth, *Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him, we will be glad and joyce in his salvation.* Their waiting and expecting of the promise to be accomplished in its time, is there the fountain of their song, and of their spiritual joy. I think sometimes a Christian is like that misbelieving Lord

rd, 1 Kings 7. 2. that though they meet with accomplishment of a Promise, yet they do not taste the sweetness that is in it, because they did not believe the word of the Lord.

The second duty that we would press from what we have spoken, is that Christians would close with the promises for their everlasting Inheritance, since Promises of the Covenant are exceeding great, and exceeding precious, and the advantage that lyeth in them is unspeakable, should not these things proclaim aloud unto us, *What should we do with the promises as your portion for ever?* I think, one that hath a right to the promises, and hath entered himself Heir unto the vast Inheritance, he may sometimes joyce in that threefold mystery of the Gospel, that to a natural man can hardly appear other than a contradiction. 1. He may say sometimes, *I have nothing,* and yet *I possess all things*; for when he looketh unto his being in the world he is a poor Lazarus, having no place whereon to lay his head, but when he casteth his eye upon his spiritual inheritance, then he beholdeth his Treasure, and is constrained to cry out, *I possess all things*. 2. Sometimes he may cry forth, *I am rich,* and yet *I am exceeding poor*: he may be rich in hopes, and yet poor in his possessions. There is much of a Christians Treasure that lyeth in hope, hope is that Thing that will make the Christian sweetly quite all other in comparison of that: That is the motto of the Christian, *Spero meliora*; which he holdeth up in his flag, even in the greatest storm, and at length he findeth it true, that hope *maketh not ashamed*. 3. Sometime the Christian will cry forth, *I am always sorrowing,* and yet *always rejoicing*: when he casteth his eye upon himself, he will sit down and water his couch with Tears; but when with the other eye he reflecteth upon Jesus Christ he will *rejoyce with joy unspeakable and full of Glory*. A Christian can both weep and rejoyce at one time, and again he can *rejoyce and weep*. No doubt, the reflecting upon the immense hope, and that everlasting Crown will make a Christian rejoyce under all his disquiements

ments and anxieties in the World, he can look the back of time, and behold a glorious inheritance. Christians have an eye of an Eagle, that can behold and discern things afar off.

The third duty that we would press upon you, is, long for the day when all the promises of the Covenant of Grace shall receive their compleat accomplishment, and when ye be entered into the everlasting fruition of all the Things wherein your blessedness lyeth. There is a threefold *come* that Christ speaketh to the Soul that is united unto him, all which they sweetly obey. There is that first *come* which is in Mat. 11. 28. *Come unto me all ye that are wearie and heavy laden.* And there is that second *come*. *Isai. 26. Come, my people, enter into thy chambers,* which is to entertain that excellent correspondency with him in troublesome times. And there is that third matchless *come*, when Christ shall say to his own in that day of their standing before the Tribunal, *Come, O blessed of my Father.* Shall we say it, That if we had Faith as a grain of mustard seed, we would cry forth, *Why is his chariot so long in coming,* and did we relish, or made a high account of the matchless Promises of the boundless Covenant, we would cry forth, *O that our time would flee away as the ships of desire.* I shall say no more but this, Christ is gone up with a shout unto the Heaven, and shall come again with the sound of a Trumpet, *sing Praises to GOD sing praises, sing praises unto our GOD, sing praises.*

The last thing that we would press upon you, is, That ye would mark the time of the Accomplishment of the Promises; And as to this, I shall say but these: 1. That ordinarily the time of the Accomplishment of the Promises, in the time when sense, reason and probability doth most contradict them: this is clear, *Exek. 37.* in the fulfilling of the Promises that were past to *Judah* in their captivity, was it not when they were as a valley of dead bones, and their hopes were in a manner cut off for their part, from the 11. verse of that Chapter compared with the 12. And 2. That the time of the

The usefulness of Faith, for promoting Sanctification. By the Accomplishment of the Promises, ordinarily, is from Dan. 9. 2, 3. and from Jer. 29. 12, compared, praying time: this is also clear with the 10. and 12. Thus saith the Lord, the time when he will visit them, and perform his good word to them, in causing them return; it shall be a time when they shall call upon me, and shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto them. And 3. The time of the Accomplishment of his Promises, it is a time when our thoughts of the promises are high and large, when once we begin to value our mercies, this is a sign that our mercy is near, and bringeth forth: however it is our duty to wait on him who can give a Being unto his Word, and sweetly perform his promises: we ought not to limit infinite Wisdom, nor to say unto him that is infinite in strength, How can such a thing be? but answer all objections of misbelief with this, God hath spoken it, and he will also do it, and draw all Objections of misbelief in that glorious and mysterious Name of His I Am that I Am, To Him be praise.

S E R M O N V I.

Acts 26. 18. To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto GOD, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are Sanctified, by Faith that is in me.

WHEN first we did begin our discourse upon the precious and excellent Grace of Faith? We told you that we intended to speak of it under a twofold notion and consideration. First as it layeth hold upon Christ for Justification; and of this we have spoken to you at some length, as ye have heard. Secondly, As it closeth with Christ for Sanctification; and of this we are to speak of it, which are a part of that excellent Oration and Discourse that Paul had before Agrippa in his own Defence: In which Oration and Discourse

course of his, ye may behold these four things eminently shining. 1. That godliness and good manners are not inconsistent, nor contrary one to another. Therefore ye will see in the *second* and *third verses* of this *Chapter*, Paul acting the part of a Courtly Orator: and believe it, there is more good manners to be learned by being seven days in the School of CHRIST, than by being seven years in all the Courts of France. This, *secondly*, That innocent Policy, he made use of in the deliverance of this Oration; which likewise doth appear in the *second* and *third verses* of this *Chapter*, where he endeavours to insinuate and ingratiate himself in the favours of the Person before whom he had stood; I confess, piety is the best Policy that is taken up in entertaining piety, howbeit, true policy may move in one Orb and Sphere with piety, and the one is not contrary to the other in some case. 3. This shineth in that discourse, even the spiritual boldness Paul had, in giving an excellent confession of his Faith, and declaring him to be God, even Jesus Christ in whom he did believe; Christ witnessed a glorious confession before Pontius Pilate for him, and he would witness a glorious confession before Agrippa for Christ; That since Christ had not denied him in that notable day, he would not now deny precious Christ in this day, and this is from the beginning, and all alongs. Lastly, This shineth in the words that Paul doth set forth the matchless freedom and unspeakable riches of Christ: not only toward himself in that he did cast the lot of everlasting love toward him; but likewise towards the Gentiles, to whom he was sent as a Preacher, and that he did gloriously condescend to visit the dark places of the earth, and to have the morning and the day spring from on high, arising on the habitations of cruelty. And in this verse which we have read, you may behold these five glorious ends of the preaching of this everlasting Gospel, for attaining of which, Ministers are made Instruments under GOD. The first is, to open the eyes of the blind, which in short is even this, to give those that

are

ignorant of God, the spiritual knowledge of the deep Mysteries of the Father and of the Son: so that from this, ye may see that the Gospel hath a kind of omnipotency, in producing effects above the power of nature.

The second we may see in these words, *to remove us from darkness to light*; which importeth these two:

The removing of Persons from an estate of misery, unto an estate of excellent joy. 2. The removing of persons from an estate of iniquity, unto an estate of holiness: *darkness* in Scripture pointeth out sin, and *light* in Scripture pointeth out holiness. 3!

The bringing us from under the power of Satan unto God, the making a blessed exchange of captivity and bondage, That these who were under the captivity of Satan, may be under the captivity of love. That those who were under the bondage of sin may be under the sweet obedience of Christ, *whose yoke is easie and whose burden is light*. Mat. 11. 30. 4. That Persons may receive the remission of sin, and the forgiveness of their iniquities. This is the great voice of the Gospel, *Come to a crucified Christ, come to a pardoning Christ, come to a glorified Christ, who hath the pardon of iniquity in his own hand, and riches of himself in the other*;

and these are the great Motives by which he studieth to perswade us to come. And the last is in the close of the Verse, *That Persons may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by Faith that is in me*; That is, That they may have a share of that glorious Mansion, of that excellent Kingdom that Christ hath purchased, and hath gone before to prepare. And withal, in this Verse as the words are set down, ye may see the excellent and orderly Method that the Gospel keepeth in conquering souls, and you may see these excellent Allurements, these perswasive Arguments that Christ holdeth forth to conquer you: as it were, Christ cometh not to us cloathed with the Robes of Majesty, but cloathed with the Robes of Love and Advantage, knowing that in this posture, he shall most gain upon our hearts.

Now in speaking unto that last end of the preach-

ing of the Gospel, we shall only according to our present purpose, take notice of this one Thing from (not intending to prosecute it, as it is an end of the Gospel) but as it is a Property of Faith: and it is that *Faith in Jesus Christ hath a noble excellent influence upon the growth of Sanctification, and the attaining of holiness. They are sanctified, saith he, through Faith in me.* We shall not stand long to clear this unto you, it is evident from *Acts 15. 9.* where the Apostle telleth us of *purifying our hearts by Faith*; and likewise *1 Tim. 1. 5.* where a pure heart and Faith unfeigned, they are joyned and linked together. As likewise *1 John 3. 3.* *Every man that hath this hope in him, he purifieth himself.* All the Graces of the Gospel, they are linked together by a Golden and unseparable Chain so that he that obtaineth one, he shall obtain all; yea more, all the graces of the Gospel they have a mutual influence upon one another's growth, so that we may compare them unto *Hypocrites* twins, of whom it was reported they did laugh and weep together, and they did grow together, even so when one grace doth rejoyce the rest doth rejoyce with it, and when one grace doth mourn the rest doth also mourn with it, and when one grace doth grow, the rest of the graces of the Spirit they do likewise grow apace.

There are only Three particulars that we shall insist a little upon: First we shall shew you how Faith hath influence upon the attaining of Sanctification, and this we make clear unto you in these respects.

1. In that it discovereth to the Soul that matchless excellency, that transcendant beauty, and that surpassing comeliness that is in Christ, which sight doth exceedingly perswade the Soul to draw that conclusion, *What have I to do any more with Idols?* A glorious sight of Christ, and acquaintance with him, maketh us fore our acquaintance with our Idols; and when once we are united unto Christ by Faith, we break that union we had with them: And indeed the want of the knowledge of the excellent comeliness that is in Christ, and of

love

to him, is the greatest occasion that the poorest
 lies and idols in the world taketh up your hearts;
 ye but once see him who is that glorious Sun of
 righteousness, ye would be forced to put in your Amen
 to that excellent confession of faith, *Ecl. 1. 2. Van-
 ity of vanities, and all is but vanity and vexation of spi-*

In that it is the grace that discovers unto a Chri-
 an the spotless holiness of Christ. Faith doth not
 ly discover the beautie of Christ, but likewise his
 holiness, and this doth make a Soul fall in love with
 that excellent thing *Sanctification*. It is recorded a-
 longst the first steps to sin and misery, that we desire
 to be as God knowing good and evil: but certainly
 is amongst the first steps to life and happiness, when
 the soul desireth to be holy, as he is holy: And I sup-
 pose this is the great ground that ye are not much
 endeavouring a blessed conformity to God, and to be
 partakers of the blessed Image of Christ, ye know not
 the beautie of holiness,

Faith layeth hold upon Jesus Christ, and draweth
 strength and vertue from him for the conquering of
 lusts, & in raising us up into a blessed conformity unto
 himself; when the Christian is weak, Faith is that
 noble correspondent between that emptiness that is in
 us, and the fulness that is in Christ, Faith is that no-
 ble correspondent between that weakness that is in
 us, and that everlasting strength that is in him:
 Therefore, there are two noble and excellent counsels
 of Faith: *First*, It counsels us not to lean to our own
 strength; And *Secondly*, To have our recourse unto him
 whose Name is *JEHOVAH* that *everlasting strength*:
 And no doubt, if we were more taken up in imploy-
 ing Christ by faith, that prophecy should be accom-
 plished, *I will make the feeble ones as David, and David*
as the Angels of GOD; and when a Christian is most dis-
 confident in himself, then God should prove himself to
 be Almighty, and all-sufficient.

And, 4. Faiths influence may be cleared in this,
 that

that it layeth hold upon the promises, and doth believe them: and believing of the promises bringeth forth that noble birth *conformity to God*; according to that Word upon which we were speaking, 3. Pet. 1. 4. by believing the promises (that is the advantage of it) *We are by them made partakers of the divine nature.*

5. Faith also believeth the threatnings that are past in Scripture against sin, and the believing them hath an undoubted and strong influence upon the attaining and growth of Sanctification; Faith strengtheneth the Christian, against the committing of iniquity with these two words, that word, Rom. 6. 20. *O soul (saith Faith) commit not iniquity, for the Wages of sin is death*; and that Word, Rev. 21. last. *There shall in no ways enter into that City any thing that is unclean, or that committeth iniquity.* And be perswaded of it, that the Faith of the Threatnings, and of the promises that are in Scripture, would be as a threefold cord, not easily broken, to restrain you from the acting of iniquity; And shall I tell you briefly the ground why these cursed hearts of ours do commit iniquity with so little fear, and with so much delight, it is even this, because we believe not the threatnings of God, which shall be accomplished in their own season; for is it possible that if ye believe that word, Rev. 21. last. *That nothing shall enter into the New Jerusalem that defileth or worketh abomination, or that maketh a lie*; that ye durst for a world adventure upon the committing of iniquity, as ye do? And I shall only say to such that do undervalue the threatnings of God, the day is coming, when they shall be constrained to cry out, *He hath spoken it, and he hath done it, and faithfull is he.* There is not one jot nor tittle in the Word of the Lord that shall fall to the ground, And believe it, God will be faithfull in the accomplishment of his threatnings as he is faithful in the accomplishment of his promises.

6. Faith discovereth unto a Christian the noble excellencies, and those spiritual dignities that are in that everlasting

lasting estate that is provided for the Saints in
 it; Faith (as it were) carrieth up the Soul to the
 of *Pisgah*, off which it is admitted to behold the
blessed land, and truly the seeing of those noble things
 are provided for the Saints, cannot but make
 them study holiness, since they know that there is an
 possibility for one to attain to that estate without
 holiness, because he had said it, *without holiness no man
 shall see God*. O then, if once ye saw Heaven ye would
 be constrained to walk in that path of Sanctification,
 because it is that glorious way by which ye must walk
 through the gates of that blessed City, but ye know
 not the excellency that is there, it is a fancy and no-
 tion unto you: and the ground that ye do not study
 to conform your selves unto that blessed image of
 God. And I would only ask you this one question, is
 it possible that such a delusion as this can overtake you,
 to think, that you who never studied holiness on
 earth, shall yet enter into Heavens gates? I know that
 there are some that say in their Hearts, *I shall have peace
 though I walk in the imagination of my own heart*: and
 many more that suppose that they might fight and o-
 vercome, that they may quite the estate of nature,
 and be compleat in the estate of Grace, all in one day:
 but why will you deceive your selves, *Can a nation
 be born in one day*? Or is there but this one step be-
 tween hell and Heaven? O remember, though noth-
 ing be impossible with God, yet there was but one
 thief saved upon the cross.

7. Faith hath the influence upon the attaining of holi-
 ness in this respect, that it believeth the exceeding great
 advantages that are promised unto the person that
 studieth holiness. Faith believeth that word, Matthew
 5. 8. *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for they shall see God*
 Faith it layeth hold upon the truth of the excellent
 sayings, and maketh the Christian endeavour to attain
 unto a likeness & conformity with him, so that he may
 be admitted to behold his face for all eternity, and
 to be made like unto him.

8. Faith discovereth unto a Christian the sinfulness of sin, this is never done till once they be in the lively exercise of the Grace of Faith. And I will give you these three grounds why Faith compleatly discovereth the sinfulness of sin.

1. Faith letteth us see the person against whom we commit this sin, and that doth exceedingly aggrege sin, for when the Christian is admitted to behold God, and to see that matchless excellency that is in him; then (saith he) what a beast was I to offend such a glorious Majesty as he? what a fool was I to kick against the pricks, or to enter into the lists with such an infinite God?

2. Faith letteth a Christian see these excellent obligations of love that Christ hath imposed upon us. Faith letteth us see the ancient and everlasting love of Christ; Faith is that grace that letteth us see his sufferings. Faith letteth us see all that he hath done for us, and this maketh the Christian to cry out, *Do I thus requite the Lord, O foolish one and unwise?* And no doubt if a Christian were more taken up in the study of his duty, he would be less in contracting debt, and were you but seriously taken up in that study of these two great Registers; 1. The Register in which all the infinite acts of love are recorded: And, 2. That Register in which all your acts of offending precious Christ are written, ye would be astonished and ashamed to see so much forgiven you, and durst nor sin any more; there ye would see infinite mercy *desiring so much joyce over judgment*; and there ye would see the spotless riches of that transcendant grace that is in Christ. 3. Faith letteth a Christian see the disadvantages of sin, and what woful effects doth follow upon it, and this doth exceedingly hold forth the sinfulness of sin.

The second thing that we shall speak to concerning Faiths influence in the attaining Sanctification, shall be to enquire a little unto these things that hinder even believers from attaining this blessed effect of their Faith. For some Christians there are, that in some respects are

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men up in the exercise of Faith; making use of Christ for sanctification, and yet their making use of Christ by Faith, doth not weaken the strength of their idols (at least to their apprehensions) neither doth it raise them up to a conformity with God; so that they are constrained sometimes to cry out, *I shall once be by the hand of one of mine iniquities*; and when they fight and doth not overcome, they are at last constrained to say, *There is no hope*.

The first ground of such a dispensation is, That a Christian is not constant in his actings of Faith; he will be strong in faith to day, and when the morrow cometh, he will faint in the exercise, that doth exceedingly interrupt that noble victory of Faith; for when Faith hath gotten its advantages, they lose them through security and negligence, that is a command that should be continualie obeyed, *Trust in the Lord at all times*; and no doubt, if a Christian were more taken up in the constant acting of Faith, he should sometimes sing you that song, *I trusted in God, and I was helped*.

Secondly, The most part of Christians they are not strong and vigorous in actings of their Faith, their Faith is exceeding weak, and so they cannot bring forth these noble Fruits and effects of Faith. If we were trusting in God with all our hearts, then that promise, *Isa. 37. 5. should be accomplished unto us. trust in the Lord, and he shall bring it to pass. Thirdly*, There is a strong heart-conjunction, and soul-union between us and our idols: we are joyned to our Idols, and therefore we cannot be easily divorced; yea, when we are in the heat of the war against them, there is a procurator within that cryeth, *O spare this little one, or this profitable or pleasant one*, and this is ordinarily our practice, to spare the choicest of our lusts, so that our *Angels* may cry forth, *The bitterness of death is past*. But I conclude, if that union were once dissolved, we should then be heard with greatest earnestness to cry forth, *O blessed be the Lord that teacheth my hands to fight. Fourthly*. Sometimes

times a Christian layeth too much weight upon the workings of Faith, and doth not imploy Faith, but as an instrument to which Christ must bestow strength to conquer. Sometimes we think that Faith hath the vertue of overcoming in its own hand, but remember Faith is but an empty thing without Christ, as you may see *Acts 15. 9.* where the *purifying their hearts by faith* is ascribed to the Holy Ghost, so that the activity of faith is from him, and not in it self. *Fifthly*, A Christian doth not hate sin with a perfect hatred, even in the time of his warfare with his lusts, and with these strong idols that are within him, but here is a secret heart inclination to that very idol which he doth oppose: So that oftentimes there is that twofold contradiction in a Christian; Sometimes his light will cry, mortifie such an idol, and yet his heart will cry out, O spare such an idol, yea more, sometimes his heart will cry, O spare such an idol. Yea more, sometimes his heart will cry, mortifie such an idol, and yet his heart will cry, O spare such an idol. That is to say there will be one part of our affection crying one thing, and another part of it will cry another thing. O but there is a remarkable command for the perfect hatred of sin, *Rom. 11. Abhor that which is evil;* the word is in the original, hate evil as ye would do hell, that is, have perfect hatred to sin, O to hate as much as hell; and joyn that word, *Eph. 5. 11. Reprove the unfruitful works of darkness,* or as the word may be rendered, *makes out by unanswerable arguments,* to your temptations, that you cannot embrace the unfruitful works of darkness, convince your temptations that ye cannot do it; As we suppose, it was a noble arguing of Joseph when he was tempted, *How shall I do this?* he puts the temptation (as it were) to it: O temptation! give me one ground why I should commit such an iniquity. And certainly, if we were thus reasoning with our temptation, they should flee before us; But the truth is, we embrace the desire of our temptation upon implicate Faith. It is, a sad regrave, and yet I shall utter it, O if men would

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not deal with God, as they do by Satan, we never put the promise of Satan, and never examine these allurements he setteth forth, & yet we constantly dispute with God upon every thing. *Sixthly*, A Christian provoketh not in the growth of Sanctification, though in some measure exercising Faith because he hath not such a heart to holiness. If we did discover more of that excellent beauty, that is in being clothed with that glorious robe of the righteousness of Christ, and in having the sweet draught of the Image of Christ engraven upon our hearts, we would have more victory over our lusts. There is a command for a perfect love to that which is good, and holiness in that same place, *1 John. 12. 9.* and *cleave* (saith he) *to that which is good*; or, as the word may be rendered, *be married and glued* to that which is good, let there be an unseparable and indissoluble knot of union between you and that which is good. And certainly, if once we believed that report which is given of holiness, we would endeavour more to be clothed with it; but that is the great ground that we advance not in holiness, we know not the advantage nor dignity, to be made *like God*. O will ye think on it: What a thing is it for you who are the dust of his feet, to be made conform to him? *Seventhly*, A Christian is not much in the exercise of other duties that should go along with Faith, suspect that faith for presumption, that can act, and be maintained without Prayer, certainly Prayer keepeth in the life of Faith, Prayer, it is that grace that must act mutually with Faith, in accomplishing that blessed work of Sanctification; and if we prayed more, and believed more, then we should have more to speak concerning the victory over our lusts. When was it, O Christian, and expectant of Heaven, that ye was constrained to put up an *Ebenaxer*, and cry forth, *Hitherto hath the Lord helped me*? When was it, O Christian, and expectant of Heaven, that ye was put to cry forth, *God hath arisen, and mine enemies are scattered before my face*? I will tell you what is your

practice, ye make such a Covenant with your idols, as *Nabash* did with the men of *Jabish gilead*, 1 Sam. 11. 23. your lusts desire to make you pluck out your right eyes, and there is nothing your lusts will command you, but almost ye will obey; but would you send out prayers as a Messenger to tell the King of such tyranny, ye should know better what it is to be victorious. There is such a Covenant between the Graces of the Spirit, especially between Faith and Prayer (if so we may allude) as was made between *Joab* and *Abishai*, 2 Sam. 10. 11. One Grace, as it were, saith to another, if I be weak, *come over and help me*, and if ye be weak, *I will come and help you*, when one grace is like to fall in battel, then another cometh and helpeth it: when faith is like to die, then prayer and experience cometh in, and sweetly helpeth Faith; when love is beginning to die, and wax cold in the sight, then faith cometh in and putteth life in love; and when patience is like to fail and be overcome, then faith comes in and speaks that word to patience, *Wait on God, for I shall yet praise him, for the health of his countenance*. Oftentimes our patience and our sense, they joyn together, for when sense speaketh good things, patience is in life; but when once sense preacheth hard things, it is like to die, and faith must then maintain and uphold it.

The Third thing that we shall speak as to Faiths influence upon Sanctification, shall be to draw these four conclusions from the point.

The first is, That ye may know from this the rise and original of your little success over corruption: There are many that are troubled with this question: O, What is the ground that I get not victory over my lusts: and they propose that question to Christ, that once the Disciples proposed to him: *Why was it that I could not cast out such a devil?* And I can give no other answer than Christ gave to them, it is because ye have not faith, *For if ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto your idols, depart from us, and they should*

should obey you, and there should not be a mountain in the way between you and Heaven, but if ye had faith, it should be rolled away, and become plain. And the great ground why many are groaning under the captivity of their idols is, that they are not much in the exercise of Faith; sometimes ye enter in the lists with your lusts in own strength, then ye are carried captives, and if ye do ever enter in the lists having some Faith, yet ye maintain not the war, if Faith get but one stroak.

I will tell you six things, which if Faith overcome, it keepeth the field, and maketh the Christian sing a song of triumph, even before a compleat victory.

First, Faith helpeth a Christian to overcome that Idol of Impatience and Discontent; some never meet with a discouragement, but they cry out, *This evil is of the Lord, why should I wait any longer?* They are soon put to the end of their patience; how Faith can overcome such an idol. And I will tell you three excellent things that Faith performeth to the Soul under Impatience, or when it is in hazard of it. 1. Faith telleth the Christian, *there is an end, and their expectation shall not be cut off*; Faith telleth there is a morning as well as a night, and this keepeth the Soul from being overcome with discouragement, when they are brought to the midnight of trouble: Faith can tell what hour of the night it is, and how near the approaching of the morning, when day shall break, and their clouds flee away. 2. Faith helpeth the Christian to see there is much in Christ to make up any loss or disadvantage that they have: if ye lose your son, or your choicest contentment in the world, Faith will say such a word as Elkanah said to Hannah, 1 Sam. 18. *Is not Christ better to thee than ten sons?* The choicest contentments ye can lose, (that is Faiths divinity.) Christ is worth an hundred of them; and so this maketh the soul to be ashamed of their Impatience, and to give over their fretting at the excellent and wise Dispensations of GOD. 3. Faith letteth a Christian see, that there is

not a Dispensation that he meeteth with, but it hath these two excellent ends, it hath our advantage as one end, and the glory of the Lord as another end; and there is not a Dispensation that a Christian meeteth with, but these are the glorious ends proposed in it. And therefore I would only give you this advice, evermore when ye meet with a dark Dispensation, let Faith interpret it, for it is only the best interpreter of dark dispensations; for if ye meet with sense, this is its interpretation, he is not chastising in love, but punishing me with the wound of an enemy, but Faith will prophesie good things to you in the darkest night.

The *second* next great idol that Faith will bring low, is this idol of covetousness and desire to the things of the world. I think that word, *Eccles. 3. 1.* was never so much accomplished as it is in these days, and amongst you, *He hath set the world in your hearts*, that is the idol that dwelleth and lodgeth within you; yea, the world it hath your first thoughts in the morning, and your last thoughts at night, yea more, it hath your thoughts when you are at prayer, and when you are at preaching; yea, it hath such a dominion over you, that it giveth you, as it were, a new Bible, and in all the ten Commands scrapeth out the Name of God, and setteth down the world. And whereas God saith, *Thou shalt have no other gods but Me*, the world saith, *Thou shalt have no other gods but me*, &c. But Faith will bring this idol low, and soon let you see the vanity and emptiness of it; yea, Faith would let you see a more noble object, and withall, discover unto you how short your time is, and how few hours ye have to spend in following after lies; and I am perswaded of this, that if ye could win to shake hands with cold death every day, and say, thou at last shall be my Prince, & shall be the King to whom I shall be a Subject; and if ye believed that the day of eternity were approaching, it would be a mean to mortifie these pursuits after the world; and I shall say, he is a blessed Christian that can maintain always such thoughts of

the world, as he shall have when he is standing upon the utmost line between Time and Eternity. I shall say it, and believe it, O worldling, and O thou that hast the Moon upon thy head, and in thy heart, the day shall once come, that thou may preach as much of the vanity of the world, as those that undervalued it never so much.

The third great idol that Faith will bring low, is that Idol of *self-love*, and *self-indulgence*, that which is the great mother of all other idols. I think if there were no more to be said against that idol of self-love, and self-indulgence, than that which is in a *Tim. 3. 3.* were sufficient; that among all the great idols of these latter times, this is put in the first place, *they shall be lovers of themselves*: we cannot take pains for Christ, we cannot go about the exercise of any duty; because that idol of self-indulgence forbiddeth us: I will tell you its counsel and great advice, it giveth you, O *person pity thy self*; that same counsel Peter gave to his Master, it biddeth you pity your self: but if ye could rightly interpret that language; it would be this, *destroy your self*; for *self-indulgence and self-love*, is that which will ruine you. O! what blessed attainments of God, what blessed fruition of Jesus Christ, what advancement in mortification, what conformity to God hath that idol of self-indulgence obstructed, and not only utterly ruined even in the best? I think if once ye could set your foot upon that idol, the rest should fall apace; that is the *General* of all the forces of your lusts, and it is a *Soul*, the head higher than all the rest of your idols within you.

The fourth idol that Faith can subdue, is self-righteousness; This is a great thing we maintain, we will never renounce our own righteousness, and submit to the righteousness of Christ; the great ground of it is, That there is this principle within us all, we love to go to Heaven thorow a Covenant of Works, and we never desire to be much obliged to any other, we cannot submit our selves to the righteousness of Christ.

The fifth great idol that Faith can subdue, is that of pleasure, the world and the attainments of it; pleasure is the great idol that many worship and adore. There are some that love the gain of the world, and there are others that love the pleasures of the world; but Faith hath a noble influence upon the bringing low such an idol; for Faith discovereth to a Soul more excellent pleasures, more sweet delights nor is to be found under the Sun; Faith maketh a Christian lose his taste unto all things that are here below; Faith is that grace that maketh us grow blind, and not much to behold these passing vanities, these transient delights of a present evil world.

Our second conclusion is, That as Faith helpeth Sanctification, so Sanctification helpeth Faith. I will tell you three great advantages Faith hath by the growth and exercise of Sanctification. 1. It is a noble evidence of Faith, and maketh a Christian to be perswaded that he is settled upon the Rock, and that his Interest in God is made sure. Sanctification is that which will help a Christian daily to read his Interest in God; This is clear from Jam. 2. 18, *I will shew thee my faith by my works*: where this is clearly holden forth, That a Christian much in the work of Sanctification, he can upon all times, give an extract of his Faith, and as it were, discover it, and shew it to the World. 2. Sanctification maketh Faith perfect, according to that remarkable word, Jam. 2. 22. *And by works was faith made perfect*. There is a noble perfection that redoundeth to Faith through the exercise of the work of Sanctification; for not only is it thereby made manifest, and receiveth such a shining lustre and splendor, as that sometimes the eyes of carnal men are even dazzled to behold a Believer, but it also receiveth strength and power; Faith is not of the nature of these things that spend themselves in bringing forth; but on the contrary, if Faith bring forth an hundred Children (I mean works of holiness) in one day, it groweth strong; and this is further clear, 2 Pet. 1. 8. *For if*

these things be in you, and abound, ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful. And from that other word, Jam. 2. where it is said, *That faith without works is dead, being alone*: If Faith be alone, it wants its spiritual life and vigor; but if ye were much in the exercise of the work of Sanctification, ye would no doubt, attain to a noble and lively acting of that grace of Faith. And lastly, if a Christian be much in the work of Sanctification, there will be a comfortable exercise of Faith: Sometimes Faith is exercised with much anxiety, and sometimes with much doubting: but Faith and a pure Conscience joyned together, they make an excellent Feast, and maketh a Christian rejoyce with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.

Thirdly, We may draw this conclusion, if Faith have influence upon the work of Sanctification, and helpeth the producing of a noble conformity to God, then I say, there are many that their Faith is a delusion, and *their hope shall be cut off as a spiders web*. There are some that have Faith, that have not Sanctification, nor knows not what it is, and shall not that Faith unquestionably *perish as a dream, and vanish as the vision of the night*? And therefore, if ye would testifie the reality of your Faith, then study more the work of Sanctification: I shall but from Job. 8. 14, 15. give you these eight properties of a Hypocrites Faith and Hope, which may make you try and examine your self. 1. Their Hope and their Faith is but an act of folly, yea, there is not such an act of Foolishness under Heaven, as a Hypocrites hope because it is but a Castle in the Air, and as writing to himself a Charter on the sand, so that word ye have rendered, *Whose hope shall be cut off*, is in the original, *whose folly shall be cut off*: shewing this, That they build without a Foundation, and so their Faith must be most unsure and uncertain. 2. The thing they hope for, shall at last loath them; O Hypocrites, ye hope for enjoyment of Christ, but be perswaded of it, Christ shall eternally loath you, and ye shall eternally loath Christ; That is clear in

that same word, *whose hope shall be cut off*, or as the word may be read, *whose hope shall loath them*; the thing he hopeth for shall loath him, and Christ shall say, *Depart, I know you not*. 3. And though ye have now much delight and pleasure in the actings of your presumptuous hope, yet at last, ye shall loath that hope; the word will carry, that not only the things ye hoped for shall loath you, but ye likewise shall loath your hope. The day is coming that ye shall cry forth, cursed be the day that ever I believed that I should go to Heaven. 4. It shall at last be the matter of his vexation for that word, *whose hope shall be cut off*, or as the word may be rendered, *whose hope shall vex him*. O! when the Hypocrites shall meet with that anxious, that dreadful disappointment one day, they shall then put their hand on their head, being ashamed because of their confidence. 5. He studyeth by all means to keep his hope, though it be but false: therefore have ye that word in the 15. verse, *he holdeth it fast*; or as the word is, *he keepeth it with hand and arm, with all his strength*; he keepeth his hope: so that if Christ would come from heaven and say, *man, thou art an Hypocrite, and thy hope shall be cut off*, they would say, I would keep my hope, Sir, and maintain it, and that is an evidence your hope is not built upon the foundation; I love never a Faith that on this side of time is unchangeable, and never knoweth what it is to have ups nor downs, 5. It is built always upon a wrong foundation, which is imported in that word, *he shall lean upon his house*, which we suppose may be interpreted thus, he shall lean upon his *worldly enjoyments*, or upon these spiritual-like enjoyments he met with. The hope of a Hypocrite is never built upon Christ, and so unquestionably that hope shall be cut off, and evanish. 6. Let Hypocrites hold fast their hope with both their arms, I will say these three words to them; First, if all the Ministers should preach to you, and desire you to quite your hope, and ye will not, yet both your hope and you shall be separate, as it is in that word

word, *Your hope shall depart from you*, and ye shall quite it. Secondly your hope will bring you to death, and no further; according to that word, Job 13. 14. *Whose hope shall bring them to the King of terrors*: Will it bring me no further say you? O! no, *The King of terrors shall separate you and your hope*. Thirdly the day is coming, when the Foundations of it shall be discovered, and there shall not be a delusion, but it shall be unfolded. The day is approaching, when Christ shall ask how you got your Faith, and how you maintained it? 7. The Hypocrites hope is a poor building, it is a *spiders web*, which I conceive (without being critick) is this: The hope of hypocrites, they spin it out of their own bowels, they have it not from Christ, but as ye see a spider spin out of its own bowels, so they do out of themselves, it is no better stuff than their own rotten righteousness; Christ never begat those unto a lively hope. Let me beseech you therefore, that by all means ye would study to make sure your Interest in God and to build your Faith on him, whose name is that *munition of rocks*: For believe it, I may say it with much perswasion, I know there are many that shall once meet (if God prevent it not) with a dreadful disappointment: and therefore as ye would not incur that eternal hazard that is attending those that presumptuously take hold of a hope, before Christ take hold of them, study to search your hope what it is: I desire not to raze any Foundation of their hope that is laid by the hand of Christ, but would desire and charge you to raze the Foundation of that hope which ye have laid from the beginning by your own hands, and *be know it not*. I would press these three things upon you. First. O! Ye that are strangers to Christ, and that know not what it is to embrace the offers of the everlasting Gospel: obey that excellent counsel, 1st Chron. 30. 8. *Give Christ your hand*; for that word which ye have rendered, *Yield your self to the Lord*, it is in the original, *Give your hand to God*, which is in short, *Metry him*, and be content to

Contrast your self to him, for believe it, the day is coming, that either that Contrast between you and Christ, shall be eternally confirmed, or that contrast between the devil and you, shall be eternally ratified. And I suppose there is much spoken to the commendation of that noble Plant of Renown, that ye may take Christ (if so we may speak) blindly, ye may close your eyes and take him, for he shall never disappoint your hope; for let you think of him to eternity, he shall always be above your thoughts. Secondly, I would earnestly desire you once to search and try what was the first rise of your Faith in Jesus Christ: I am perswaded of it, there are many that take up their Faith at their foot, they never travelled in pain, and yet Faith is brought forth. Is not this a mystery? Shall it be said, *before they travelled they brought forth*; I do not question, but there may be lesser and greater pangs of the new birth; but this is most certain, there is always some either lesser Troubles or greater, till that child be brought forth; and yet I may condemn these that *stay too long in the place of the breaking forth of Children*. Christ will never refuse you, when ye do really come; because ye have not been so many years and days Imprisoned to the Law. Thirdly, let me desire you to go and ask, is there a grave between you and Heaven, in all that way through which the Saints have travelled, upon which this is written, *here lyeth a man that sincerely sought life from Christ, and he denied him*? I think, without encroaching too much upon the searching forth of the exercise of the Saints in Heaven. I think we may suppose, there may be in Heaven some Quirits and Interrogations; Christ shall ask, O! beloved, Did ye want any thing here below when ye were sent forth to travel in the world? And ye shall be constrained to answer, No: Christ shall ask that Question, at you Did I not all things well? And ye shall be constrained to answer, Yes: Christ shall propose that Question, Are ye not well rewarded for all your pains? And ye shall be constrained to answer, Yes. O! but to take him:

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He is the blessed and most excellent one in Heaven and earth: it is, the best bargain that ever ye made, O! ye merchants that hath made many excellent Bargains to your own apprehensions, will ye come and make an excellent bargain, yea that will make you eternally up. And what is that? Come and buy Christ, and take him for nothing; this is not your ordinary bargaining. There is few comes to you and biddeth you buy excellent things *without money*; but come in the Gospel, and ye shall get Christ *without money*, O! Niggards that are loath to spend your money in the world will ye come to Christ and believe on him, take him freely: O! say ye, if I could get three things of Christ, I would come. 1. I would have much gold and silver: I say come to Christ, and ye shall get much gold and silver: Is that true? It is abundantly true; See Job 22: 23, 25, 26. where pressing that exhortation, *Acquaint thy self with God*, and using many arguments, he saith, *Thou shalt lay up gold as dust, and the gold of Ophir as the stones of the brooks*: Is not that gold enough? Yea, ye shall have silver likewise, *Thou shalt have plenty of silver*. In the 26 verse, ye shall not only have gold and silver, but ye shall have *plenty of it*, and shall have the most excellent and refined gold. But O! say ye, what, will that promise be literally accomplished to me, if I come to Christ? I would only say these three things to thee; 1. Come to Christ and if gold and silver be for thy advantage, thou shalt have it literally accomplished. 2. I say, ye shall have as much contentment in Jesus Christ, as if ye had this house full of gold. 3. I will say this to thee, Christ shall be thy gold and silver, according to that word in the 26 verse, which is most remarkable; yea, *the Almighty shall be thy defence*; or as it is in the original, shall be thy gold, speaking of the promise of gold before. Secondly, Ye say, I would have this, that what I propose might be accomplished, I say, come to Christ and ye shall have that likewise, Job 22. 28. *Thou shalt decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee*; which I conceive

ceive, doth not only take in these spiritual decrees but likewise these that relate to temporal enjoyments. But there is a third thing I would have (say ye) and I would come to Christ, and it is, That might have all the desires of my heart? I say, O man, and O woman, come to Christ, and thou shalt have what thou desirest; this is clear from Ps. 37. 4. *Delight thy self in God; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.* What can ye have man but it is there? Would ye have any thing of Christ? He putteth a blank in your hand, and saith that word which is said to Solomon, *Ask, What would ye have, and I shall give you.* Christ as it were, putteth his Name to the foot of a clean sheet of Paper, and he desireth you to ask what ye would have, and is not this an excellent bargain? O Nigard what would ye have which ye will not get in Christ? And be perswaded, that ye that refuse and will not take him, the eternal curse of all that is in Heaven will return upon thy head, the eternal curse of all the expectants of Heaven, and Heirs of Life, will return upon the head of that person that will not take Christ. And cursed, cursed shall that person be, who will not take Christ, and one day all the Congregation in Heaven and earth, shall say *Amen.*

S E R M O N VII.

2 Cor. 13. 5. *Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?*

Assurance is a precious gift, which many that live in these days do undervalue, and tread under foot; do not the Christians of these times, go halting between two opinions, being neither positive that they are received into the adoption of children, nor yet positive that they are yet in a state of alienation, and *enclosed in their mind by wicked works*; yea, and (that which

worse) there are many among us that walk with much contentment under their uncertainty. I think it is a fault to be condemned in many, they pursue more to satisfy their sense for the present, nor to have solid well grounded assurance for the time to come. I could wish that all the debates and questions of these days, that take up so much of our time, and so much of our spirits from better things were happily drowned in these four excellent questions, which without controversie, are of greatest concernment for all to have resolved. 1. Where shall I rest all night, when the long shadows of the everlasting evening shall be stretched out upon me, and whether or not hath Christ gone before to take up a place for me in his Fathers house? 2. It is a soul concerning question, *Master what shall I do to inherit eternal life?* To be asking at him that can sweetly resolve you.

And 3 Not to rest there, but to be crying forth in the morning, *What shall I do to be saved?* And to be crying out in the evening, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*

4. It is sweet to be asking seriously, *Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?* There is much of our time spent in asking news from Court, and from abroad, concerning the Revolutions of States and Kingdoms.

But I suppose it were better to ask, what news from Heaven concerning thy self? And what news from within, and news of thy Bridegrooms coming? For these are great Courts, I mean the Court of Heaven, and the Court of Conscience, the affairs of which a Christian should endeavour much to know.

5. It is a soul concerning question, that a Christian should be much in proposing to himself, *What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits?*

It is certain we must say that our Faith and Assurance; and all our other mercies are from him: And yet alace, we are negligent in praises, we may with *Tamar* rent our garments of divers colours, even the garments

mothers of the Kings daughters, because of spiritual whoredom against God and our ingratitude to him.

Now having spoken unto you at so great a length, of that precious and fundamental grace of Faith, we have thought fit to shut up all in speaking a little upon these words we have now read, concerning the evidence and assurance of Faith.

The Apostle in this Chapter, is vindicating his Ministry and Apostleship, from the contempt that was cast upon it, he proveth he was a Minister of the new Testament, called and sent of God by the blessing and success he had among them, in that he had not plowed nor threshed in vain, and they being so much incertifying his way, and seeking an account of his Ministry: In these words he doth as it were, draw them off by a holy diversion unto another business, as if he had said to them, *O Corinthians, I will divert you from the exercise of judging me and will lead you into an exercise that is more divine and profitable.* Be much in judging & examining your selves; and indeed it is a Truth worthy Observation, That if we were more in judging of our selves, we would be less in judging others; but alas, there are some of us, we are so much abroad, that we cannot be much at home.

In the words, there is these six things considerable.

First, that there is such a thing attainable by a Christian while he is here, as a distinct perswasion and assurance that he is in the Faith, and hath an Interest in Christ, *by being in the Faith*; here is not to be understood a being in the Doctrine of Faith only, but it is to be understood of principally, being indeed and really united to Christ by Faith,

Secondly. The seeking after assurance is a necessary commanded duty: for ye see here the words are very imperative, *Examine your selves, prove your selves.*

Thirdly. That there are many mistakes and delusions among people, concerning that noble and excellent thing Assurance there being many that keep fast a hope which Christ shall once discountenance and sweep away.

may like a spiders web and this is imported in these words, *Examine your selves*, or as the word may be rendered, *Take an accurate and an experimented search of your selves*, try your selves, or prove your selves; it is a word that is borrowed from the Gold-smiths fining and trying of Gold: And so his putting of the *Corinthians* to accurate a search of themselves, saith this clearly to us, there are many mistakes concerning this thing, many do pass a decree in their own favours, before Christ hath passed his approbation of them.

Fourthly, Take notice of this from the words, that there is much, and exceeding much advantage, by trying and searching whether we be in the Faith or no; This is imported in his doubling the exhortation.

Fifthly, That one most excellent and spiritual way of attaining Assurance, whether we be in the Faith or no; is self-examination, and putting our self to the Tryal; as if he had said, would you have a distinct perswasion that ye are in Christ, then be much in the exercise of self examination. For the rest of the words of the verse we intend not to handle.

As to the first, That there is such a thing attainable, I shall only propose these reasons unto you to make it evident. 1. It is known in Scripture, That the Saints of old, have in an ordinary way, attained to distinct perswasion of their Interest in Christ, Song 6. *My beloved is mine, and I am his* And Rom. 8. 38. *I am perswaded* (saith the Apostle) *that neither death nor life, &c. shall be able to separate me from the love of God in Christ.* And 2 Cor. 5. 1. *For we know, if this our earthly tabernacle were dissolved, we have a house with God not made with hands, but eternal in the Heavens.*

2. It is the great scope of many scriptures, to shew how Christians may attain unto assurance. 1 John. 1. 12. *These things I write unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life.* The great end and design of Johns writing in these Epistles, is to make a soul acquainted with Christ, and to make them to accept of him, and to give them a distinct Assurance that Christ hath accepted

cepted them. 3. There are many commands in Scripture, for Christians to be serious in searching after Assurance 2 Pet. 1. 10. *Wherefore brethren, give all diligence to make your calling and election sure.*

4. It is the blessed end of Gods oath in the everlasting Covenant, that a Christian might get Assurance.

What was the great ground and great end, that God confirmed his Covenant with an Oath? Was it not Heb. 6. 18 *That by two immutable things, wherein it was impossible for God to lie, ye might have strong consolation.*

5. If Assurance of our interest in Christ were not attainable, then these precious graces of Joy and love could not be well exercised: if a Christian were ever more in the dark, concerning his interest in Christ, he could not give obedience to that exhortation, *Rejoice evermore, again, I say, rejoice.*

6. The Scripture hath set down these means by which a Christian may win to Assurance, as is clear 1 Joh. 3. 18, 19. 2 Pet. 4. 5. compared with verse 10. where the Apostle Peter pressing the Doctrine of making our calling and election sure, he setteth down these excellent means by which they may win to it, and doubtless the marks and evidences that are registered in the Scripture of a gracious state, doth assure us that Assurance is attainable.

7. What are the ends of the Sacraments? But that our Assurance may be confirmed, and that our Faith may be strengthened. The two Sacraments are the two great Seals of Heaven, that are put to the Charter of the Covenant.

Now as to the Application, and the more full improvement of this first point, I shall only offer these considerations. 1. I would have it taken notice of, That though Grace and Assurance be two Lovers, yet there is no such Bond of Union between them, that the one cannot consist without the other. A Christian may have the real grace of God, and yet walk in darkness and no light. A Christian may be going to Heaven, and yet that word oftentimes in his mouth, *I am cut off from*

fight. Yes, are there not even some who have had Assurance, and some time a day have been admitted to know that conclusion, *I am my beloveds, and his desire is towards me*, who are now under darkness concerning their Interest and in much bitterness of spirit, do sometimes cry out, *My hope and my strength is perished from the Lord*. But therefore let me say this one word, both to weak ones who never had Assurance, and deserted ones who have lost it: when ye miss Assurance, beware of drawing such negative conclusions concerning your Graces; but when ye sit in darkness and see no light, *Trust in the Name of the Lord, and stay your selves upon your God*: That is when ye cannot reach the Faith of Assurance, be much in maintaining of adherence: remember *Jobs* divinity, *Though thou should kill me, yet will I trust in thee*: And consider that sweet word, *He will keep them in perfect peace, whose hearts are stayed on him*.

My second consideration is, That since Assurance is attainable, ye would study to find out and remove these things that doth hinder you from attaining unto it: And that we may help you in this, we conceive that the obstructions of a Christians Assurance, are especially in these two.

1. Our mistaking of the Lord's dealing towards us
And 2. Our untender and unsuitable dealing towards him. Of the first sort we shall lay before you these five.

The first is want of favourable Returns of Prayer; this often maketh a Christian to debate his Interest, and call in question Evidences. *Lam. 3. 8.* compared with *verse. 18, I cry and shout, but he shutteth out my prayers*: and this is the conclusion of that dispensation, *verse 18. My hope and my strength is perished from the Lord*: and this is especially occasioned when the Christian is most serious and fervent in prayer, and when he meeteth not with a return, this maketh them exceedingly debate their Interest: And I confess, it is a sad dispensation to meet with a silent Christ in prayer; but yet that needeth not to make a Believer question

all and debate the reality of his interest in God, since the dearest of all the Children of the kingdom have been dealt with, even as David Psal. 22. 2. *Cryed night and day without silence, and is not heard but cryeth out, Why art thou so far from helping, and from the Words of my roaring; yea, that passage may relate to him who was the root and off-spring of David, for even he was so dealt with, and had not presently a sensible return, when he had prayed thrice, that the cup might pass from him.*

Secondly. The want of sensible enlargement and liberty in prayer, that he never goeth to his knees, but his heart beginneth to die like a stone within him, then he cryeth forth that word. 2 Cor. 3. 17. *Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty: and sure if I had the Spirit of the Lord, I would have liberty in the exercise of prayer: And that this is a Rise of the disputing of our Interest, is clear from Psal. 77. 4. compared with verse 7, 9. saith David, I am fore troubled that I cannot speak, I have no liberty in prayer, I never go to God in prayer, but (as it were) my tongue sticketh to the roof of my mouth; he from hence draweth that conclusion, Hath God forgotten to be gracious, and will he in wrath shut up his tender mercies for ever?*

I confess this also is a sad dispensation, to meet with an absent and veiled Christ in prayer; so that we can never go to seek God in secret, but we may write this upon our prayers. *He is gone, he is gone*, especially when we have lost that liberty that formerly we have had; and therefore is David's perplexity much heightened verse 5. 6. from his remembering his song in the night, and his calling to mind the years of ancient times: yet we may remember how soon David wrote his retractions as to that conclusion, *I said this is my infirmity.* vers. 10. and so should we do when upon every straitning in prayer, we begin to question all the Lord's kindness towards us.

A third obstruction of Assurance, is a Christians wrestling with his corruptions painfully and seriously.

yet not meeting with any sensible victory over
 em; but upon the contrair, their corruptions seem
 be stronger, and they themselves seem to be weaker;
 then it is they strengthen their misbelief, but that
 ord 1 John 3. 3. *Every man that hath this hope in him,
 if he keep himself even as he is pure*: And indeed, this is
 not that is not easily loosed, but when he seeth idols
 and corruptions pravailling over him, he will cry out,
gone, and there is no hope in Israel concerning this thing,
 yet this also is a word in haste, *Paul* hath registrate
 himself a standing witness, even after he was a chosen
 vessel, *Rom. 7*. How strangely a child of God may be
 ern down with a body of death, even under most terri-
 ble wrestling against it, and therefore if thou serious-
 ly maintain that combat, though thou do not sen-
 sibly pravail, thou hast no reason upon that ground,
 to weaken thy Assurance.

Fourthly, When a Christian is put to more than or-
 dinary outward affliction, when God doth dispense
 unto them in outward things, they then begin
 to call in question their Interest, and dispute their
 Assurance. This is clear, by comparing *Lament. 3*.
 verse 18. with the preceeding words, where speak-
 ing of the sad dispensations they meet with, he draw-
 eth that in verse 18. *My hope and my strength is perished
 from the Lord*. And *Job 2. 4*. where he draweth that
 conclusion from such a promise, *I am now cast out of thy
 sight*. The devil he taketh *Eliphaz* divinity, and pre-
 sents it to a Christian; *Call now if there be any to answer
 thee, and to which of the Saints wilt thou go?* As if he
 had said did you ever know a Christian afflicted so
 as thou art afflicted? And so he would have *Job* to
 quit his integrity. But yet we know all these blessed
 ones, for all their afflictions were dear unto the Lord,
 and had their interest secure in him: yea, as many as
 he loveth, he doth rebuke and chasten, and it is the bastards
 and not Sons, on whom he will not bestow a rod; and
 therefore, we ought not to quarrel our Interest be-
 cause of Afflictions.

And.

And lastly. The rise of a Christians discouragement and that which hindereth their Assurance, is, when their former experience of the manifestations of God doth not relish to them, and when the promises upon which they have built, become tasteless unto them as *the whites of an egg*, and when they meet not with God in ordinances, but these become lifeless, when these three rise together upon them, their case becomes very perplexed oftentimes: and this also seemed to have been *David's case*, *Psalm 77*. *When he remembered his song in the night, and the days of old*, and yet had no sweetness in them, then he breaketh forth into these bitter complaints which are there expressed: but yet as we said before, this was his infirmity, and there is no reason for a Christian to reason his interest upon such account, because the Ordinances are not at all times alike lively even to the best, and the Lord is not always present, but though sometimes the *candle of the Lord* doth shine upon his head, yet at other times he is necessitated to cry out, *O that it were with me as in months past*.

The second sort of Obstructions of a Christians assurance, I mean such as flow from our untender dealing towards God, are,

First, a guilty conscience: that is a remarkable word *1 Tim 3.9*. *Holding the mystrie of faith in a pure conscience*. It telleth us, that this excellent grace of Faith cannot bide but in a cleanly lodging, even in a pure conscience; and when a Christian setteth about to believe, he will know how a guilty conscience will fly in his face, and cry out, *O adventure not to believe, dare thou believe*? The guiltiness of a Christians conscience maketh him oft to cry out, *Touch not the mountain lest thou be thrust thereto*. And I tell you three disadvantages of a guilty Conscience;

1. It obstructeth a Christians boldness in making application to Christ; his heart saith *close* and his necessity saith *close*; but his guilty Conscience cryeth out, *O stand a back, and do not close*.

2. A guilty conscience, oftentimes it hindereth the

coveries of Christ to the soul, and doth so affright
terrifie, yea, it will so sting and bite us, that when
he revealeth himself, we cannot take notice; when he
would lay on a plaister, our souls will tear it off, and re-
fuse to be comforted. 3. It doth exceedingly obstruct our
going about duty: O! but our souls move slowly in
the paths of God, when we are under the power of a
lusty Conscience.

The second obstruction is, that we are not much in
the exercise of tenderness, O! but if a Christian were
under, and if in every step of his life he desired to set
himself before his eyes, he would easily win to much Assu-
rance, according to that word, *Isai. 64. 5, Thou seekest
that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, and these that
remember thee in thy ways.* Would ye know the assured
Christian? It is the tender Christian: that Christian that
doth not crucifie convictions, the Christian that break-
eth not resolutions, the Christian that doth not sit calls
and opportunities to prayer, the Christian that saith
not of any sin, *it is a little one*, or the Christian that
searcheth always, watcheth always, examineth always,
and is always casting out sin, and that is the assured
Christian.

The third objection is, The want of the exercise of
the grace of fear, we are not much under this disposition,
to fear the Lord and his goodness; This is clear from that
word, *Psal. 25. 14. The secret of the Lord is with them that
fear him, and he will shew to them his covenant.*

I think there are these two great evidences, that
much of the power of godliness is gone from some of
our hearts, we fear God no more, nor if he were our
companion; and we fear our selves no more, nor if we
had not a deceitful heart within us; we neither fear
God nor our selves, and that speaketh that much of the
life of Religion is lost amongst us.

The fifth thing that doth much obstruct our Assurance,
is much worldly mindedness, and eager pursuit after
the things of a present life; that is remarkable, *2 Cor.*
verse last, compared with *2 Cor. 5. 11*

We look not unto the things that are seen, that is, we are not much taken up with the things of a present world, which the men of the World seek and delight themselves in; and it is subjoyned, *For we know that if this earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a house not made with hands*, so we see Assurance and Mortification of the world are much knit together. Would ye know where to find our hearts? The most part of us are conversing with Idols of the World. Would ye know where to find our hearts? They are among the vanities of the world. O! how true is that word psal. 39 *Man walketh in a vain shew*. What is man in all his doings! But as one walking in a long gallery that is set about with pictures, gazing on these things, and saluting them all, as if they were living Kings and Queens, and great persons that could do him good; and so our pursuing after the world, is nothing else but a *dead shadow*, pursuing after *dead shadows*; a man that is but a short living shadow pursuing after vanity and nothing, and thus he fool away his time, forgetting to make sure *the one thing necessary*.

5. Want of distinct apprehensions of these three, the infinite love of Christ, the infinite power of Christ, and the infinite Wisdom of Christ. There is not an objection O! Christians, that ye have from the multitude of your sins, but it may be drowned in infinite love. There is not an objection that ye have from the strength of your idols, but it may be drowned in the immense ocean of the infinite Power of Christ. There is not an objection ye have from your wants, or about your evil nature, but ye may drown it in the infinite wisdom and goodness of Christ. And there can be nothing against your Assurance, but may be sweetly answered also from these, rightly applyed, taken up, and rested on by the Soul.

The last thing which hindereth our Assurance, is, the smallness of the measure of grace that we have attained for when grace is small, it is hard to be discerned; and therefore, if ye would have assurance, leape not to still and dispute, but to rise up and to increase your

stood

and then ye shall know you are rich : Grow in
and in the knowledge of God, and by this, ye shall
if ye follow on to know the Lord.

The third consideration is, That Assurance is not be-
wed at all times; but there are some special times
and seasons, when God giveth a Christian a broad sight
his interest, and I shall but name these.

The first is, when he is first converted, and Christ and
joyns hands together, even then sometimes the best
he is put upon the prodigal son, and the fatted calf is
killed, and a ring is put upon his hand, and shoes upon
his feet, Acts. 9. 17. Paul meeteth with assurance, im-
mediatly after his conversion, 1 John 12. 14. I write
unto you little Children, because ye have known the Father,
and before that in the 12. verse. I write unto you little
children, because your sins are forgiven you, so that when a
Christian is brought unto Christ, he will (as it were)
read them to the Registers of Heaven, and say, friend
come and see, here is your name written from eternity :
but do not mistake me, I do not say, this is always so,
but these that Christ converteth through the thunder-
ings of the Law, they most frequently meet with inti-
mation of the pardon of their sins, and peace of God,
even at their first acquaintance, I know there are some
Christians if ye ask at them when they were begotten
to a lively hope, they would say that word that the
blind man once said, one thing I know, I was once blind,
but now I see; but for the time and for the day I know
not when it was.

The second time is, when they are wrestling with
God like Princes in Prayer, and watching unto that ex-
ercise, Dan. 9. 23 compared with the preceeding verse,
he being much and serious in Prayer, doth meet with
that word from Heaven, O man, great, beloved, or as the
word is, O man of desires, and Acts 10. 2, 3, 4. when
Cornelius is much in the exercise of watching and prayer,
he seeth a vision and getteth intimation of peace with
God; and Jacob when he was wrestling with God; Gen.

32. he hath that testimony given him, *Thou hast as a Prince wrestled with God and prevailed.*

The third time is, when a Christian is passing through the gates of death, and is upon the borders of Eternity. I desire not to be mistaken in this neither; I know some Christians are led to Heaven thorow a dark trance, as they never see a blink of the countenance of Christ untill the day come that they get him in their arms eternally within his Fathers house. Some Christians when they go through the gates of death, they may be disputing of this question, *where am I going?* But this is certain, that sometimes, yea, oftentimes Christ will dispense a broad sight of a Christians interest unto him at the day of Death, 2 Sam. 23. 5. when was it that David sang that song, which hath strengthened thousands in the very jaws of death, *God hath made with me an everlasting Covenant*, was it not when death was shaking hands with him. And 2 Tim. 4. 8. When was it that Paul sang that song, *I have fought the good fight of faith, I have finished my course, henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness*: was it not even then when he was ready to depart, and to be offered up? And when was it when old Simeon did sing that blessed song, *Luke. 2. 29. Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation*: was it not within a step of death? And it were, he went to Heaven with CHRIST in his arms, or rather in his heart, he carried Christ with him, and found Christ before him, and so death to Simeon was a change of his place, and not a change of his company.

The fourth time is, when he is put to some hard and difficult duty: Before Abraham be put to forsake his native land, and become a stranger and a wanderer, he meeteth with sweet intimations of his interest, Gen. 12. *I will make of thee a great nation*: and verse. 7. The Lord appeared unto Abraham. And before Jeromiah sent a Preacher unto a rebellious people, he will have that word spoken unto him, *I knew thee, before thou wast brought forth.*

The fifth time is, when a Christian hath done some

regular Act of Obedience; when Abraham had obeyed the Lord, and was content to offer up his *Isaac*, he meet-
with a sight of his interest and Covenant renewed to
him with an oath, Gen. 22. 16. *By my self I have sworn
because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withholden thy
even thy only son, blessing I will bless thee, and multi-
plying, I will multiply thee as the stars of heaven.*

The sixth time is when a Christian is to meet with
hard tryals, difficulties and afflictions in the world, then
they usually meet with assurance; and so Gen. 28. 14,
16. before Jacob go to serve Laban, he meeteth
with intimation of his peace with God.

The seventh time is, when a Christian is under sad
persecution and affliction, then will the Lord give a
word from Heaven to comfort him, and assure him of
his fatherly love and mercy. When was it that Christ
left that noble Legacy to his Disciples, Joh. 14. verse
27. *My peace I leave with you, my peace I give you*; was it
not when he himself was to leave them to troublesome
and sorrowful days in a persecuting world.

The eighth time is at some solemn ordinances and ap-
proaches to God; the days of a Communion to a tender
Christian, have been sweet days, when Christ hath come
to the soul, and said, *Behold me, behold me.* I think the
seven Apostles met with much assurance of their Inter-
est in Christ at the Communion they were at with him;
what sweet intimations were these, *This is my body
which is broken for you, and this cup is the New Testament in
my blood shed for you?* And a little after, *you are they which
are continued with me in my tentation, and I appoint unto
you a kingdom.*

We come now to the second point which we propo-
sed from the words, viz. That as assurance is a thing
which may be attained, so to seek after it, is a neces-
sary duty; let me not be mistaken, as if I had said, the
having of Assurance were simply necessary to Salvation;
no, that were a Doctrine as comfortless upon the other
and as the popish doctrine of the impossibility of As-
surance is upon the other; But the thing I say, is, that

the Christians seeking after Assurance, and his real endeavouring to attain unto it, is a necessary command of God, which he hath bound upon the consciences of his children, among other Gospel duties; And certainly, we need go no farther for the clearing of this, than the Text it self; what meaneth these peremptory injunctions, *Examine your selves whether ye be in the faith or not: Prove your selves, Know ye not, &c.* But if ye will ye may add that word 2 Pet. 1. verse 5, and 10: compared, what can be, more expressly commanded, and more strongly pressed, than that Christians should bestow their outmost endeavours for attaining unto this blessed condition of assurance; *Give all diligence, yea, give all diligence, yea, the rather give all diligence to make your calling and election sure.*

From this we shall only lay before you these considerations. 1. If the seeking after assurance be a necessary duty, then these three things are most lamentable. First, That there are so many in this generation, who are so pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed from their iniquity; they flatter themselves with a rotten assurance that hath no other foundation but their own imagination, they never knew since the first day they were baptized, and did begin to profess Christ, what it was to mortifie one lust, nor seriously to wrestle against one temptation, and yet they want not a strong perswasion of their interest in Christ: But ah, will ye stand firm, lest ye meet with such a dreadfull disappointment as (when ye think ye are in the very gate of Heaven) even then to fall backwards to the very bottom of hell, and when ye expect a kindly welcome from the Lord of Glory, as one who thinks you have been in Covenant with him this many years, ye meet with that dreadfull summons, *Depart from me ye cursed, I know you not.*

2. How sad may we be upon this account, that howbeit assurance be an attainable thing, and a great matter dare not say they have attained it; yet so little diligence is used in pursuing after it; Is it not very lamentable that many of you to whom I am speaking, since first ye

ye up your names to Christ in a visible way, and were
 entered amongst the generations of the seekers of his
 face, scarce ever set a day, or an hour a part to examine
 whether ever indeed you were in Christ or not. Alas, is
 heaven of so little moment? is the having or wanting
 the enjoyments which are there of so small concern-
 ment to you, that ye will not be at the pains as once to
 enquire after your interest in the matter? What if any
 of you were but possessors of a thousand pound, and
 your interest or right unto it uncertain and question-
 able, would not your sleep depart from you, and you
 must be uneasy till you had made it more secure? What
 think you shall the men of this generation answer in the
 day of the Lord for neglecting *that one thing necessary*?
 when they have been so vexing themselves *about many*
things, and have been so serious in so many consultati-
 ons to make sure a worm-eaten portion in a perishing
 world, that the whole wit of men and Angels cannot se-
 cure for one moment? it is certain, the root of all
 unbeliefness is atheism. It is not possible that we be-
 lieve as really there is a Heaven, as we believe there is
 on Earth, or that the world to come is real as that which
 is present; or else it must be a strange power in the lusts
 that keeps us captive, that we are never suffered to
 think upon eternity, nor to ask where we must lodge
 when this cottage we carry about shall fall about our
 ears. O will you think upon it, how serious and pre-
 cious that Command is, *a Pet. I. 10. Give all diligence,*
to make your calling and election sure. When the Lord
 saith, *Give all diligence,* will ye give no diligence? and
 when he saith, *make your calling and election sure,* will ye
 leave all upon uncertainty? *I said to the foolish deal not*
foolishly.

3 It is most lamentable, that since assurance is at-
 tainable, yet men live contentedly under the want there-
 of. How strange is it, that many are so seldom on
 their knees complaining of their uncertainty? If
 Christ were precious unto you, would it be so? I am
 sure there are some of us here that have had the name

of Christians, I know not how long, that never had on sad thought about the want of assurance: when we look upon the desolations, vastations and plunderings in the world, how many of us can cry out, *They have taken away my gods and what have I more?* But when we speak of heaven, we care not who deprive us of our portion there. I will not limit the Lord, nor determine what he may do, but believe it, it is one to a thousand, many Christians of this age have a pleasant night, and comfortable closing of their eyes, they are such undervaluers of Assurance: I may fear that lamentation shall be heard upon the death-beds of many, *O! poor wretched wandering soul, where art thou going?* And it is no wonder to come to this, when we are so long in beginning to ask the question. And now I close with this one thing, that I think beyond all question, the souls that live contentedly under the want of Assurance, are *the careless daughters that dwelleth at ease*: Christ and they are at a remarkable distance, it must be a cold winter, and dark night (at best) as to their present fellowship with God.

A second consideration from this point is, that if the seeking after Assurance be so necessary a duty, then let me beseech you to ponder with your selves, what means are fit for you to use, that ye may attain it; and if you enquire what these means are, I shall only lay before you some few.

1. That ye would be much in the exercise of Faith, mean the direct Acts of Faith, whereby the sinner from the sense and feeling of his wants, layeth hold on Jesus Christ, closing with him, and leaning upon him for full supply out of his fulness: for indeed there are two great faults amongst the Lords people; 1. Some do seek Assurance of Faith, before ever they seek to have Faith. 2. Some are much more taken up in debating their evidences, whether they be real or not, than they are in strengthening their evidences; so that most of their time is spent in questioning. O! Is this a real evidence of Assurance; whereas more actual believing in Christ and gripping to the promises, and less disputing

is the shorter, and surer way. That word is most
 clear, Eph. 1. 13: *After ye believed, ye were sealed with
 spirit of promise; that is, ye got assurance, but not
 before ye believed. And ye know it is said, Mat. 9. 29:
 And when JESUS saw their Faith, he said, be of good com-
 fort, thy sins are forgiven thee: so then it is clear, that to
 be much in believing, is the nearest way to Assurance.*

2. Ye would be much in believing the general Truths
 and Promises of the Gospel, and frequently meditating
 them; all Assurance is by a practical Syllogism; the
 first whereof must needs be a Scripture Truth; And cer-
 tainly, the firm Assent of that Truth, and the souls de-
 lightful meditation on it, is often blessed of the LORD,
 as a special mean whereby the conscience is helped to
 make the Assumption, and also to bring forth the con-
 clusion: For instance, we see with what strength of af-
 fection Paul setteth his Faith on that word, 1 Tim. 1.
 4. *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation,
 that Christ Jesus came to save sinners; and presently see
 what followeth on it, Of whom I am the chief, then is his
 Assurance; for doubtless he meant, that he was the
 chief of Saved sinners. Yea, certainly a sinner thus ex-
 ercising himself, will often find so much sweetness in the
 general Truths, that he cannot but put to his own name*

3. Be diligent in the exercise of all spiritual graces
 and Christian duties; that this is amongst the best
 means of attaining to Assurance, is manifest from 2 Pet.
 1. *Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure;*
 for indeed it is very observable, that the diligence
 there mentioned, is not a diligence in disputing and
 questioning about our election; but a diligence in the
 practice of duties and graces, as is clear from verse. 6.
*Give all diligence, (saith the Apostle) Whereto? In
 adding to your Faith vertue, to your vertue knowledge, and
 to knowledge temperance, &c. And then verse 8. If ye do
 all these things, ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in
 the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ: he doth not say in
 the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ simply, but of our
 Lord Jesus; importing that the result of diligence in
 these*

these graces, shall be in the knowledge of Christ ours, and of our interest in him : and then be added (upon the other hand) *he that lacketh these things, is blind, and cannot see afar-off* ; this is, he cannot see far in any spiritual matter, and so not in the matter of his interest, O therefore, think not that ye will get assurance by lying down with the slugard upon your bed, or by your formal prayer, or your anxious debates, but if ever ye come to assurance, ye must be striving as in an agony, for so the word importeth, which is used to express our diligence in Christian duties.

4. As ye would be diligent, so if ever ye would come to assurance, ye would be tender and circumspect in your walking, that is a clear word, *Psal. 50. last verse, To him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I shew the salvation of God* ; and *Isa. 32. The effect of righteousness is peace and assurance for ever*. Ah, the untender walk that many of us have : it is no wonder to see us walk in darkness, such stinking gross vapours that ariseth off our conversation, cannot but engender clouds that hinder us from seeing God, and certainly such pearls as *Assurance*, is not given to dogs and swine lest they tread upon them.

S E R M O N. VIII.

2 Cor. 13. 5. *Examine your selves, whether ye be in the Faith ; prove your own selves, know ye not your own selves how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates ?*

THere are two great ballances in which men do weigh themselves, there are some that weigh themselves in the ballance of deceit, who think that in all their labours there is no iniquity to be found, yet God who is the weigher of the spirit, when he shall weigh them, will engrave upon their forehead *Thou art weighed in the ballance, and art found light* : but there are many who approve themselves, whom

Christ

Christ shall never approve; There are many that call God Father, whom he will not call Children and many that call Christ Husband whom he will not call Spouse. 2. There are some who weigh themselves in the ballance of the Sanctuary who upon solid and most spiritual grounds do draw this conclusion, *I am my beloved's; and his desire is towards me*, who can with boldness and confidence look Christ in the face, and say, *thou art mine*, and with much spiritual confidence, take him in their arms, and cry out, he shall be eternally mine; and sure there is not a more pleasant life than to be taking him every day in our arms, and to be crying out, *Am I not made up in him? Am I not made up in him?*

Before I come to the words, there are three great and most soul concerning errors amongst the Christians of these days; that we desire ye may consider. 1. There are many that are more desirous to know what they are, than what they would do: there are some that are more taken up to know whether they be justified and sanctified; than to be indeed justified and sanctified; and they are more desirous to know if they be in Christ, than indeed to be in him; and therefore we find many who do spend a great deal more time disputing that question, *whether am I in Christ or not*; than they do in using of these means by which real union and communion with him may be attained: But oh, will you once study more to be in him, and that shall be the shortest way to attain to the knowledge of your being in him. The second great error is that some are more desirous to know what they should do, than they are desirous to do what they know. Are there not many of us that have this question, *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord?* and yet we do not know his commandment is with us, that we *should do justly, and Love mercy, and walk humbly with our God.* A third error is that we are more in talking of Christ, than in believing in him, or closing with him; some of us think to win to heaven by discourses, if we can talk of Christ, we think all is without debate or con-

troverſie; but alas, there are many who were ſwift talkers of Chriſt, that are curſing him this day in heart. And I would only ſay this by the way, if there be any of you, that have win to any ſoul-perſwaſion of your intereſt in Chriſt, I intreat you if ye can put the concluſion upon record, that in ſuch a day of ſuch a month, and ſuch a year of God, you did then write to cry out, *I am my beloveds and he is mine*; it ſeemed to have been *Dauids* practice, *Pſal. 16. 2. O my ſoul thou haſt ſaid unto the Lord thou art my Lord*, and it was *Jeremiahs* practice, *Lam. 3. 24. The Lord is my portion ſaith my ſoul*. I ſay, ye ſhould even mark that concluſion as they did, that when temptations come, and begin to aſſault you, may look on your record that ye have ſet down, and be aſhamed to miſbelieve. It is true, that for a little while our aſſurance at beſt will be but ebbing and flowing; but I hope ere long we ſhall be above the reach of miſbelief, and above the reach of fears; I hope ere long we ſhall diſpute no more, we ſhall be jealous no more, we ſhall queſtion our intereſt no more, when all our diſputings and queſtionings ſhall be ſweetly drowned in that infinite ocean of eternal delight and fruition of God. O *expectants of Heaven*, *expectants of Heaven*, are ye not looking after this day? are ye looking after it? I know not what we do here, if we be not walking foreward every day, he is upon his way, O to ſee him, we would even ſtand and wonder at him: I hope the day is coming when we ſhall never loſe our grips of Chriſt any more, he is coming, he is coming; and I think if Chriſt would give a paſs, we would long to go hence; O what ſtreets are theſe that are there? Is there any here who is groaning for Heaven, be of good comfort, I hope ere long he ſhall come, he ſhall come and waſh all tears from our eyes.

Now at the laſt occaſion, when we ſpoke upon theſe words, we told you that there was five or ſix things which we intended to conſider in them. The firſt was, that ſuch a thing as a diſtinct and well grounded per-

persuasion of our interest in Christ was attainable: and of this we have already spoken. The second thing is, that concerning this noble and excellent thing Assurance, there are many mistakes among the people of God; and to make this evident, it is clear first in this text, from that serious and accurate search in this matter, which the Apostle putteth these people unto, as we cleared unto you from the force of the words, and his doubling of these exhortations *try your own selves, prove your own selves*, 2. From the many commands which the Lord hath left upon record that we should not be mistaken concerning our assurance, 1 Cor. 3. 18. *Let no man deceive himself*. Gal. 6. 3. *If a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself*, and therefore doth the Apostle add, *Let every one prove his own work*, and verse 7. *Be not deceived*. 3. The point is clear from this, that we find in Scripture many who have been mistaken most dreadfully in the matter of their assurance. Hos. 8. *Israel cryeth out, my God, we know thee*, and yet Israel was in a great mistake: for in the words following, verse 3. *Israel had cast off the thing that was good*, and Pro. 30. ver. 12. we find *there a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed away from their iniquities*. 4. It is clear from this, that it is a great design of Satan, the great deceiver, that we might be mistaken about that noble and weighty point of our assurance, of being in Christ. Is there not a power given unto him from Christ to deceive the nations? I may say, that in no point doth he more prevail to deceive us, than in this, if profanity kills its thousands, delusion kills ten thousands, and this delusion its twenty thousands. Lastly, doth not this prove how much a Christian may be mistaken in the matter of his assurance, even that name which is given to our hearts, Jer. 17. 9. *It is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?* no doubt this may shew us (though there were no more) how ready our hearts are to deceive us, making us to en-

tertain

certain a delusion in stead of truth, and imbrace a shadow instead of substance.

The next thing that we have to speak to you upon this point, is to shew you where these mistakes do ly, and what are these false grounds by which so many do deceive their own souls in this matter; and here there are two sorts of persons whom we must inform. 1. There be some who upon most unwarrantable grounds do conclude, that their interest in Christ is sure, when indeed it is not. 2. There be some (upon the other hand) who from sad mistakes of themselves, and the Lords dealing towards them deny that they have an interest, when indeed they have. The first sort are the worst, and in the most dangerous condition, and they build upon these six false foundations, which we beseech them to consider.

The first is, their supposed sensible enjoyments, some Christians in these times especially, do meet with some flashes of light and joy which they have not been (it may be) acquainted with before, or at least not in such a measure, or in such a sensible manner, and upon this they presently cry forth, *My beloved is mine, and I am his*. I shall not dispute with such, about the reality of these enjoyments, or how they come to know that these are such as proceed from a saving work of the Spirit of grace but waving that debate, give me leave to say this much of all enjoyments and sensible manifestations (as to the point in hand) there may be sometime a good supporter to underprop a Christians assurance when it tottereth, but never a good foundation whereon he may lay the first stone of that building: and therefore he is the wiser Christian who first tryeth the reality of his interest in Christ by other blessed fruits of righteousness and holiness; before he trust the reality of sensible enjoyments, how sweet or comfortable soever they may seem to be; 2. Some build their assurance upon the number and bulk of their duties, without considering the frame of their Spirit, and the principle from which they flow; they

the prayer, and reading, and conference, they wait upon ordinances, and are always there where the means are thought to be most powerful: and upon this they ke up themselves, in their own arms, blessing themselves, as that poor man, *Luke 18. I fast twice a week, I pay tithes of all that I possis*: but alas. they do not consider that they do but build their houses upon the sand, which the first blast of a remptation will overturn, because not only all our duties, when weighed in the ballance may be found light, but when, put to the tryal may be found empty, dead and lifeless things, wherein the LORDS Soul can have no pleasure.

3. Some are mistaken in the matter of their assurance, by judging themselves by the Law, not knowing, or not regarding the spiritual meaning thereof: *Paul* was a gallant man (in his own apprehension) when he was without the Law, that is, when he knew not the spiritual meaning of the Law, he thought himself the most eminent Saint in all his Nation; and as he sheweth us, *Phil 3.* he could compare with any of them; but when the Lord openeth his eyes, we see he put himself last in the roll of Saints, and first in the roll of sinners, *Rom. 7. He was alive without the Law.* that is he thought himself living and reigning above his sins; but *When the Commandment came*, that is, when it came to his knowledge, and when he saw the spirituality of it, *sin revived and he died*; he then saw how that he had triumphed before the victory, he saw all his sins alive, and as it were risen from the dead, and himself a dead man, lost and undone in the estate he was in. O how many are there amongst us in *Paul's* first condition? *alive without the Law.* O how many destroy themselves with this, they think there is not a sin forbidden in all the Law of God but only Ten, but alas, thou fool, thou erreſt in this, not knowing the Scriptures: should thou not judge thy self by the Spiritual extent of the meaning of the Law, and that divine Commentary which the apostle *James*, hath set forth upon it, wherein he sheweth thee, *That if thou be guilty*

of the breach of one point, thou art guilty of all, and by the infallible Exposition which Christ himself the blessed Law-giver hath set down, *Mat. 6.* whereby he discovereth adultery in the Heart and in the Eye. O atheist, thou must take up the ten Commandments and subscribe guilty to them all: And let me tell you this, if ye will subscribe the Law to Christ, he will subscribe the Gospel to you; if thou wilt sincerely say *I am guilty*, he will as sincerely say, *I have pardoned*, *Son or daughter be of good courage, thy sins are forgiven thee.*

Fourthly, Some build their assurance upon the apprehensions of the hatred of some particular sin, that albeit it was sometimes as their right hand, or their eye, yet now they can pluck it out, or cut it off: But O, will thou but consider, some sins may be made weak, and the Soul (though not upon a right principle) brought to hate it, and to cry unto it, *get you hence*; and yet the interest of Satan may be strong in the heart. The *fifth* mistake is of many who judge themselves, because they go a greater length than the former, and are kept free from all gross outbreacking sin; how many are there who go sleeping down to Hell with this; I am no drunkard, nor adulterer, nor murderer, nor thief, nor whore: this long have I lived in the Town, and they were never born that can say, I have wronged them; and so they venture their Souls upon this, they never committed any gross sins. I beseech you be not deceived, remember how that wretched man did speak, *Luk. 18. 11. I am no extortioner, nor adulterer, nor even as this publican, &c.* poor creature that he was, Christ giveth not a Testimonial to every one who take it for themselves: & I must tell some of you, that there may be desperat atheists without God, and without Christ in the world, and yet be free from gross outbreacking sins; I do not think but many of these who crucified the Lord of Glory, were kepted from other gross sins; what knowest thou, O man that there is more favour shewed to thee, in that thou art kepted from some gross sins, when yet thou hast a desperately wicked heart.

part, than is shewed to the devil, when some links of
his chain are taken in, and restraining power keeping
him from his outmost bounds, God will sometimes re-
strain a hypocrite, or a heathen, as it was said of *Abi-
elech*, and *God restrained him*: there may be a cord put
upon thy jaws, when thou art far from having the
power of conquering grace: it may be also, that all
that abstaining from outward out-breakings, proceedeth
out from outward disadvantages, and not from any fear
of God, or respect to him, yea, not so much as from
the fear of any eternal punishment: are there not many
amongst us, believe it, there are many that take away
hame, and Church-censure, or civil punishment, and
other inconveniencies of that sort, and set a thousand
Hells before them, they would not be kept back
from one sin, but would take their hazard of them all:
Yea, is it not want of Tentation and nothing else,
that hindreth many from gross out-breakings; if Satan
would come but with a kindled match, there wanteth
no more to let tongue and hands, and all on fire of
Hell. O wretched Soul, do but ask thy self how often
thou hast tempted Satan, when he would not tempt
thee, and how often thou hast followed a temptation,
when it fled from thee; yea, when the Lord hath
hedged up thy ways, that thou could not overtake thy
lovers; how many a long look hast thou sent after them,
and what lustrings of thy spirit within, and do ye think
that heart-sins are nothing, although thou had no out-
breakings, what were the matter of that: if thou had
not a tongue, thou would break the third Command,
and *curse God in thy heart*; if thou had not an eye, thou
could commit *adultery in thy heart*: if thou had not a
hand, thou might commit murder *in thy heart*. O
therefore build not thy assurance upon this, that thou
hast made clean the out side of the platter, when yet
all filthiness is within. The *sixth* false foundation u-
pon which I am sure too many build their assurance,
is their gifts and parts, especially upon these two, the
gift of Prayer, and the gift of Knowledge; but be-
lieve

lieve it, it is not much to be a Christian in tongue; but it is much to be a Christian in heart; know you not that this will cast out many, *We have prophesied in thy Name, and in thy Name cast out devils.* No doubt, they had been excellent flourishers, and if the Tongue would have done it, they had been highly advanced; but yet ye see these men meet with a depart from me. I know you not. Ah, think upon it, he is not the best Christian that is the best Orator. Religion that is pure and undefiled, consisteth more in the affection than in the Tongue, and more in practice than in profession. I beseech you when you cast up your evidences of assurance, consider how well you have done, and not how well you have spoken.

The seventh false ground whereby many do misjudge themselves, is, their supposed peace of Conscience. O faith one, my Conscience doth not charge me with any thing, I thank God I have a quiet mind and nothing troubles me; but ah, poor wretch, wilt thou tell me may not the strong man be within, and therefore all is at peace? a dumb Conscience, and a seared Conscience, is a dreadful plague. Knowest thou not that many say, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine own heart, and because they say so, the Lord shall not spare them, but all the curses in his Book shall ly upon them.

The eighth false ground is the approbation of other Christians, so that if they have the approbation of some such exercised Christians, or if they have the approbation of such a Minister, that is the way to silence all their disputings. O cursed be the person that putteth his trust in men who are liars: O man or woman let me assure you this, if ye had a Testimonial to present to Christ, subscribed with all the hands of every Christian that ever ye were acquainted with, this will be enough for Christ to reject you and it both. *I know you not, and therefore depart from me.* There is an emphasis in that word, *I know you not*: as if he had said, it is not much though all other know you, if I know you not.

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The ninth False ground is their diligent observing the Ordinances, their going to preachings, and their coming to Communion, and running to and fro, pretending this end, *that knowledge may be increased*; but know there are many that have sitten down at a Table with Christ here, that shall never sit down at the higher Table with him hereafter: Are there not many that shall say unto Christ in the great day, *have we not eaten and drunken in thy presence, unto whom thou shalt say, depart from me I know you not.*

The tenth false Foundation, which is the strong delusion of Atheists, of which no doubt there are many here to day, is the building of their eternal happiness upon this, I never met with a cross, I never knew what it was to have a sad day; but to thee I shall only say, it may be thou never had a joyful day neither, in all thy sinfull pleasures under the Sun; but let me tell thee, it is bad divinity to conclude, therefore I am in the way to Heaven: It may be it were better reasoning, (and though I will not say it, yet it cometh nearer truth) I had never a Cross, therefore I am going on in the way to Hell. O! wilt thou but consider, what if he be heaping coals upon thy head, and setting thee to the day of slaughter? What if this word be your portion, eat, drink, and be merry while you are here, for to morrow thou must certainly die? What are all your pleasures, and what are all your honours, and what are all your possessions? What are they all? Are they not a bone cast unto a dog? The Lord valueth them not: what if they be the fattening of you to the day of slaughter?

Now as to these who deny they have had an interest in Christ, when indeed they have, they commonly deceive themselves, and vex their own spirits upon some of these mistakes. 1. Some judge of their estate by their present state and condition so that if they be in an evil frame, they begin and raze the foundation; and to such I would only say, that every change of condition doth not speak change of estate; a child of God

God may be in much darkness, and under much darkness, and yet a child of God still. *Psalms*. 73. It was an evil frame to be as a beast before God, and yet even then he keepeth grips and holdeth him by the right hand: *Job*. was often in a very evil frame, and yet he holdeth fast his integrity; and why then should thou upon that account cast away thine?

2. Christians judge their estate by dispensations, they think every change of dispensations. speaketh a change of estate, and if Christ do not smile always, we know not what it is to keep up the Faith of our interest: and indeed this is a great fault among Christians, that when they cannot read love in the beautiful face of Christ, they think it is not in his heart. What though he change his dispensations, doth that speak forth a change of thy estate? Christ cannot change his voice to us, but we think he changeth his heart: Christ cannot speak to us in the whirl-wind, but we cry out, why art thou become unto us as an enemy? O shall precious Christ be thus mistaken.

The *third* ground of mistake about our interest in Christ is, that we judge of our Estate by what we are in our selves, and not by what we are in Christ. When a Christian beginneth to judge and search himself, he can find nothing in himself, but what is the matter of doubting, and therefore thinks it high presumption to think himself a Believer: But O fool, can thou not look to Christ, and cry out, though in my self I be nothing, yet in Him I am all; O if Christians knew to judge of themselves, by what they are in Christ, and not by what they are in themselves, that with one eye they might look to themselves, and cry out, *I am undone*, and with another look to Christ, and cry out, *There is hope in Israel concerning me*; That is, with one eye they might look to themselves, and *blush*, and with another eye they might look to Christ, and *hope*; that with one eye they might look to themselves and *weep*, and with another eye that they might look to Christ and *rejoyce*. O Christian, wilt thou judge
always

way of thy self by what thou art in Christ, and not by what thou art in thy self; yea, I would say this to thee by the way, when thou meetest with tentations that put thee to dispute thy interest, do but send them to Christ to get an answer, and say, O precious Christ, answer this temptation, for this is Christs way with the soul, the Law must bring us back to Christ, and Christ must send us back to the Law, and deliver us over to it, not to the condemning power of it as before, but to the directing and guiding power of it as a rule of holiness; so that a Christians whole life must be a sweet and constant travelling between Christ and the law; when thou hast broken the law, flee unto Christ to take away guilt, and when thou hast closed with Christ, come running out again in his strength to perform the Law.

The *fourth* mistake, that Christians judge of their estate by the measure of their graces, more nor by the sincerity of them, some Christians if they find not love in such a degree, and if they find not repentance in such a degree, immediatly they begin and raze the foundation, and do call their enjoyments delusions, and their faith presumption, and their mortification hypocrisy; but I must say this to thee, we would not only weigh our graces in the ballance, but try them also by the touch stone, for the smallest piece of gold is gold, and the least degree of faith is alike precious, with what the Apostles themselves had.

The *fifth* ground of mistake among Christians, is this that they compare themselves more unto the Saints than they judge of themselves by the Word. O faith one, If I were like *David*, I would believe; but I am not like *David*, nor *Job*, nor *Hezekiah*: and therefore there is none of the Saints to which I should go, and if I should call, there is none to answer, and why then should I believe? I would only say to thee whose objection that is, it is even *Davids* objection, *Psalm. 22. 5, 6. Our Fathers trusted in thee, O they were excellent men, but what a man am I? A worm and not a man;* and

and yet he was put from that objection: and I would say this, are ye below him, in what? I hope ye are not below *David* in necessity; now though ye be below him in grace, if ye be not below him in necessity, ye have so much the more right to believe, for as we have said before, necessity giveth you a right, and the more necessary, the greater right to believe.

The sixth ground is, that Christians judge of their estate by Christs part of the Covenant, and not by their own, rather examining themselves by what Christ hath promised to do for them, than by what is left them to do; which thing if it be heeded, would put a close to many of our mistakes and disputings.

Having now laid out some mistakes upon either hand, the next we would do, is to propose some considerations to press you to guard against these mistakes, especially the first.

And the first consideration is, that mistakes about ones interest in Christ, and Assurance, is a most universal and popular evil: it is not one of a city nor two of a family, but many are mistaken in their interest in Christ? that word *Prov* 30. 12. *There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not cleansed from their iniquity*; it is not one or two that are under this mistake, but it is, a generation; and I suppose there are many of us that are of this Tribe and Generation, *Mat* 7. 22. He saith, *many in that day shall say unto me, Lord, Lord, and have we not prophesied, and yet he shall say unto them, I know you not*: since it is so universal a mistake. I intreat you be much in the search of your selves search your own selves; certainly I think, if there were but within this Church one that were under this mistake, it should put us all to this, *Master is it I, Master is it I?* But how much more since there is a generation of mistakers, should it not be our exercise every day to cry out, *Is it I?*

The second consideration is, that as it is a most universal, so also it is a most irrecoverable mistake. O, if ye mistake about this, your being in Christ, there is no making

Waking up of that mistake, if once ye pass the borders of Time with this lie in your right hand, I am in Christ, there is no hope of recovery, eternity will cut off access to make up mistakes: I intreat you go not down to your grave with this, I am in Christ, when Christ may say, I know you not: I believe it, if ye could have a testimonial subscribed by all the hands of the most eminent and tender Christians that ye have known, that ye are indeed a Saint, and if all the Ministers that ever you spoke to, should praise you in the gate, and declare you to be a son and daughter of Abraham; yet when you shall bring up your testimonial to Heaven, and the Father shall read it; and shall ask you where is my son's Name, if that be not there, it will certainly be rejected, and cast over the Bar.

Thirdly, It is a soul destroying delusion, this mistake about ones interest in Christ, is the very ruine of the immortal soul according to that word, *Isai. 44. 20. A deceived heart hath led him aside*, and what is the fruit of it, so that he cannot deliver his soul, and by consequence it may be said, that they destroy their soul: I believe it, there are many that go to hell in a chariot of delusion; we know some Christ guideth to Heaven by the gates of hell, and letteth them not see life, till they be in sight of hell; but it is true also, there are others whom the Devil guideth to hell, by the very borders of Heaven, he maketh them believe they are dwelling in the gate of Heaven all their days, and yet at last they are thrust down to these habitations that are prepared for the devil and his angels.

Fourthly, If once a person be mistaken about their interest in Christ, they will have these three notable disadvantages attending upon them. 1. As long as he is under this mistake, he is without all reach of profiting by the Ordinances, for when he heareth preaching; he will apply promises, when he should apply threatenings; and upon the other hand applying threatenings, when he should apply promises; and so that which should be his medicine becometh poison to him.

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2. As long as he is under this mistake, it maketh him that he cannot pity nor have compassion upon himself, that though he be the most suitable object of compassion, yet he knows not what it is to weep over his own ruine. 3. Readily all his graces are but delusions, all his good motions are but flashes, and all his mortifications counterfeit, and all his tenderness is but the mother of stupidity, and therefore guard against mistakes about your interest in Christ, I intreat you.

Fifthly, Consider that mistakes about ones interest, is a most abiding and constant mistake, believe it, if once we mistake in this, it is one to a hunder if ever we come right again, this is clear, Jer. 8. 5. *They hold fast deceit, they keep it with their hands: and Iſai. 44. 20. There is a lie in their right hand, that is, they hold the lie, and they keep it with all their power; I say, if once one be mistaken concerning their interest in Christ, it is hard to put them from it; yea, delusion it is such an abiding thing, that we find Christ speaketh of it, as if it would wait upon one before the judgement seat of Christ; and as if some would never quite their hope of Heaven, till Christ pronounce that word, Depart from me, I know you not, delusion may carry us over the borders of Time, and lead us in to eternity.*

Sixthly, There is much counterfeit Religion that is in those days, there is a painted faith, there is a painted love, there is a painted mortification, and there is a painted tenderness; and some they love shadows and pictures, and yet they do not love the very shadow of Christ, and are there not many who think they are embracing Christ, and yet are embracing a delusion and a fancy.

That which *Thirdly* we would speak to from this point is, to give you some evidences by which ye may know if the assurance ye have of your being in Christ, be right or not: Believe it, there are many that draw that conclusion, *I am in Christ*, which the devil and their own deceitful heart hath drawn, and Christ never

ever gave consent to it: And I shall propose these ten or eight evidences of real assurances, by which you may discern,

First, A real assurance is a purifying and sanctifying assurance, this is clear, 1 John 3.3. *Every man that hath hope in him. That is, perswaded of him that he shall come to Heaven, He will purifie himself as he is pure*; And 2 Cor. 7. 1. *Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse our selves from all filthiness of flesh and of the spirit.*

O! When a Christian getteth Christ in his arms, he cannot but cry forth, *What have I any more to do with holiness?* When he hath once gotten Christ in his arms, he will answer every temptation that he meeteth with this, *I am not mine own I am bought with a price, I cannot now dispose of my self*; and if your assurance of going to heaven be not a purifying assurance, be perswaded of it, it is but the devils pillow sewed over your *sin holes*. Is it possible a person can be assured of Heaven and not study holiness, can such a delusion as this overtake you.

Secondly, A real assurance putteth the Christian to a pressing and earnest pursuit after communion and fellowship with God, is it possible for one to be assured, and not to be saying, *he is sick of love*, this is clear, Song. 2. 16, 17. *My beloved is mine, and I am his*; and immediately followeth: *Turn thee, O my beloved, and be like a young roe, or a young Hart upon the mountains of Be-ther.* And it is clear Song 7. 10. 11. *I am my beloveds and his desire is towards me*, and what followeth upon that; he cometh and inviteth Christ, *O come down with me to the fields, let us lodge in the villages.*

O when gave you Christ such an invitation as this, O precious Christ, let us lodge in the villages, and go down to the secret places of the field; and Psal. 63. 1. *My God, there is his assurance*: and immediately followeth upon that, *Early will I seek thee, my soul thirsteth after thee as in a dry parched land where no water is.* There is a pressing desire after communion: But I would ask you,

you, Are there not many here who have the hope of heaven (to their apprehension) and yet the desire of communion with Christ, was never with them? I desire to say to thee, (be who thou wilt) *Be not deceived, God is not mocked, that which thou sowest thou shalt also reap.* I think there are some of us, we would let Christ live in heaven many days without giving him one visit, if He would let us alone: But O, if we were within sight of our interest in Christ, how often would this be our complaint, when he were absent. *They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him, or my Idol hath carried me away from him, and I know not where to find him.*

Thirdly, Assurance of our being in Christ, will put us to the exercise of praise; believe it, I think this is one of the most searching evidences of assurance. There are some Christians they will be convinced for the neglect of the duty of Prayer, but for the neglect of the duty of Praise, they never have one conviction; and I tell you the reason of it, prayer is selfish grace (so to speak) but praise is a denying grace; prayer seeketh, but praise giveth, *Exod. 15. Ho is my God, I will prepare him an habitation, and he shall dwell with my father's God, I will exalt Him. Psal. 118. 28. Ho is my God, I will praise him, he is my God I will exalt Him.* What needeth David these repetitions, might not one suffice? No saith he, I would even spend my days in this, *My God, my God;* and there is much of Heaven in that word, *God and love committeth many sweet melodies.* Now I say to thee, was thou ever put to the heart-exercise of praise, by this assurance thou hast this is an evidence indeed, but alas, many of us cannot say it.

Fourthly, A person that liveth within sight of his interest, Christ is matchless unto him; as is clear, *Song 2. 3. I sat down under his shadow;* there is Faith and assurance of it; and what accomplisheth that? *As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the few;* Christ hath not a match saith the Spouse, in his sweetness.

weetness, his power, his beauty, and his usefulness, above all.

Fifthly, Real assurance is a humbling thing, the Assurance of a Christian maketh him to sit low in the dust: Was not Jacob low in his own eyes, when he cried out, *I am less than the least of all thy mercies?* What, was not David low in his own eyes, when he spake that word, *What am I, and what is my fathers house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?* And was not Paul a low man in his own eyes, Eph. 3. 8. *I am less than the least of all thy saints;* and when he cried out, *I am the chief of all sinners?* The Assurance that is real, it will make a Christian to sit down in the dust, and cry out, *Wo is me, I am a man of polluted lips.*

Sixthly, Real Assurance will put him to take much pleasure and delight in the going about of duties. That word Psal. 40. 8. *My God, saith he, that is his Assurance;* and presently he subjeyneeth, *I delight so do thy will, O Lord;* this he speaketh of himself, as himself, and likewise as a type of Christ, Psal. 119. 115. *Depart from me all unrighteousness, I will keep the commandments of my God.* I believe the love of Christ, when it is much in exercise, it will constrain us to our duty; and therefore this proud transporting Assurance in these days, that setteth men above all Duties and Ordinances, and maketh them count the Gospel, as well as the Law, *but beggarly Rudiments* and cry out to their neighbours, *Stand back, for I am holier than thou,* must needs be a delusion.

Lastly, There are these three properties of a real Assurance, it is a begotten Assurance, it is a living Assurance, and it is a constraining Assurance.

The first two properties of it are set down in that 1. Pet. 1. 3. *He hath begotten us unto a lively hope;* who begat that Assurance in thee? I suppose some have Assurance, and it was begotten without travel; but if Christ be not the Father of thy Assurance, it will vanish and pass away. And *secondly*, it must be a living Assurance, some hearts are dead as a stone, and yet they say, they have the hope of Heaven. And *thirdly*, it must

must be a constraining Assurance, it will put the Christian to do what he commands, yea, if it were the most pleasant *liac* that we have, if he commanded us to sacrifice it, we would put a knife to the throat of it, and be willing to offer it up.

Now after all these evidences, I desire to have a report from you concerning your estate; what think ye of your selves, are ye in Christ or no? I suppose if Christ should come here to day, and put us all to the Door but only these that are in Christ, we would have a thin Assembly; I confess, I wonder, that that sword doth not make us to walk with sadness, *Many are called, but few are chosen.* Now I ask this question at all, as in the sight of God, and as you will one day answer unto him that will be your Judge; what think ye of your selves? Is there none here that can give a present positive answer to this, *Are ye in Christ?* I suppose this, if I were to go round them that are here, and ask, are ye in Christ, *are ye in Christ?* O! I doubt much if there should be many negative answers within the Doors, we have so strong a Faith some of us that since we were born, we never doubted of it. But I think (without commending doubting) I may say, the faith that thou never doubted of, is too like delusion, and the faith that thou never took pains to keep, and yet it kepted it self, that is too like a delusion. But let me close with this, be your estate what it will, search and come away; I think that is one of the most Gospel invitations that is in all the Scripture, *Lam. 3. 40. Let us search and try our ways, and turn again unto the Lord;* when thou hast searched come away; for I tell thee this, there will be nothing that will commend thee to Christ so much as necessity, and I hope there is none of you but ye have enough of this: and I know is, if ye will not come to Christ he will compel you to come, but it shall not be for your advantage to stay away, till ye be compelled. O persons that are out of Christ, *come away;* O persons that are in Christ, *come away;* we must preach the

ord come away, unto you, as long as you are here,
I ye come and be fixed as a pillar in the house of God,
and go no more our. O study to be near him! O
Christian, didst thou never think upon this, and say
with thy self. O! when shall I have immediate em-
braces of blessed Christ, when there shall be nothing
between my heart and him? Till then, we never
et Christ near enough, there is always something
between him and us, till we be above the clouds. O!
these immediat Soul infoldings and embracings of
Christ: Are ye never sending a Messenger to Heaven,
desiring a pass to go away, that ye may enjoy them?
And are ye not longing for the day, when the waters
of Jordan shall divide themselves, and the ransomed of
the Lord shall pass thorrow? Now let us sing praises
to our King, sing praises, for he hath gone up with a shout, and
shall come again, sing praises to our King, sing praises.

S E R M O N VII.

1 Cor. 13. 5. *Examine your selves whether ye be in the faith? prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?*

I Think ere long, there are many that passech under
the notion of Professors, that the veriest Atheist
when he beholdeih their walk, may cry out, *Art
thou also become like unto one of us?* Are there not many
here, that are in a golden dream, and in a fools para-
dise, that dream they eat, and behold when they awake, they
shall be hungry? Therefore I think it is incumbent u-
pon us, to search and examine our state and condi-
tion; profanicy hath slain its thousands, but delusion
and presumption hath slain their ten thousands. It
was an ancient complaint of Christ, Luk. 12. 57. *And
why even of your selves judge ye not what is right?* I am
perswaded of this, there are many Decrees of peace
past upon earth, that are never ratified in Heaven;
G 2 there

there are many that cry out, *The bitterness of death is past*, whom yet God by the sword of his Justice shall hew in pieces before our eyes. We told you at the last occasion that we spake upon these words, there were six things we intended to speak from them; of the first three we have spoken.

That which we intend to speak to at this time, is That there is much Soul advantage and spiritual gain, that doth redound to the Christian by the distinct persuasion of his interest in Christ; this we gathered from *Pauls* doubling the command of searching and trying themselves as if he had said, it is a business that will be so much for your advantage, that is incumbent for you to search and try diligently. And for further clearing of the point, I shall only give these three places, *Rev. 2. 17. I will give unto them a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, that no man knoweth but he that hath received it*: By the new name, and the white stone, is understood Assurance, and the Intimation of it to the Soul: This indeed is such a mercy, that I defy any to make language of it, no man knoweth it, much less can he express it, but he that is the possessor of it; and that place *Isa 62. 3. I will give unto them a new name, which the mouth of the Lord will name*. O what a Name must that be which the Mouth of the LORD will name? I think what he giveth must be one of the noblest Names that ever was given, all the Styles and Titles under Heaven, cannot equal it. And thirdly, We see *David* in the 18 Psalm, found much sweetness and advantage in this when nine times he hath that word, *My strength, my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer, my strength and my buckler, the horn of my salvation, and my high tower*: O *David*, what needeth all these Mys? *David* would answer, O! he is so sweet in himself, but O! much sweeter to me, when I put to that possessive note, *My*.

Now to speak more particularly to these advantages of Assurance: The first is, That a person that is assured of his interest in Christ, he is much in desiring communion

communion with Christ. Tell me, O thou whom my Soul loveth, (there is his Assurance) where thou feedest, and where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon? There is desire of communion. And Song 7. 10, 11. My beloved is mine, and his desire is towards me; there is this Assurance; and immediately followeth, Come my beloved, let us go forth into the fields, let us lodge in the villages, there her desire of communion. Song 2. 16, 17. My beloved is mine, and I am his; and what followeth upon that, He feedeth among the lillies, untill the day break, and the shadows flee away. Turn my beloved, and be as a roe, or a wild hart upon the mountains of Bether: that is in short, let me have sweet correspondence & fellowship with thee till the day of eternity shall come. I think the desires of an assured Christian, they are like the grave, they cry continually, Give, give and they never say, it is enough. What is the reason ye seek so little after fellowship with Christ? It is even this, ye are not persuaded of your interest in him; believe it, if once ye had attained to this blessed length, as to cry out, Christ is mine, it would be a hell upon earth for you to live at such a distance with him, as you do for the most part. O! but Assurance maketh absence from Christ an un-supportable burden, Psal. 22. 1. My God, my God, there is assurance; and immediately followeth this complaint, why hidest thou thy self from me? Song. 3. 1, 2, 3. That word, Him whom my soul loveth, made her to weep so much under absence from Christ; and Joh. 20. 13. When the Angels ask the question at Mary, woman, why weepest thou? I think she thought it a needless question, and she tells the cause of it, They have taken away my Lord; I think her heart was at her mouth, when she pronounced these two words, My Lord, she spake them with a great deal of emphasis and force; could ye represent absence with Christ so little, if ye were sure he were yours? I confess it is no wonder when persons lose that which is not their own, that they weep not much for the loss of it: but oh! to lose

that which is our own, it maketh it a cross and burden to us.

Secondly, It maketh the soul to have a high and matchless esteem of precious Christ, Song 5. 10. *My beloved is white and ruddy, the chief of ten thousand*; O saith the Spouse, I never saw his like, and I shall never see him like again; there is much in that *My*: interest maketh her look upon Christ with another eye nor she would have done, strangers look upon him but as a tree planted upon the sand, 1 Pet. 2. 7. *To you that believe, Christ is precious*, not every one, And Song 2. 2. *I sat down under his shadow with great delight*, the reason is interest in the words going before. *As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons*; yea Assurance will make every thing in Christ exceeding pleasant to the soul, as is clear, Song 5. 16. *My beloved is altogether lovely, or he is all desires*. I tell you what assurance will do, it will make Christ's person pleasant and precious to the soul, it will make Christ's Nature pleasant to the soul, it will make Christ's Offices pleasant to the soul, and it will make Christ's promises pleasant to the soul, it will make threatnings pleasant to the soul, it will make the smell of Christ's garments pleasant to the soul, and it will make the kisses of his mouth pleasant to the soul: O! saith the assured Christians there is nothing in Christ but it is most pleasant and is all desires; His threatnings are pleasant, they are the wounds of a Friend, and his kisses are pleasant, they are better than wine, his Name is pleasant, it is a precious Ointment poured forth, His smillings are most delightful, *whose countenance is as Lebanon, excelling as the cedars*: O to imbrace a married Christ, how pleasant is it to the soul. What maketh you have so low thoughts of Christ: even this, the want of Assurance, that he is your husband.

Thirdly, Assurance will make the Christian patiently to submit to every cross and sad dispensations he meeteth with: This is clear Heb. 10. 34. *They took with joy the spoiling of their goods, and what made them do so*

hoped for a better inheritance, and a more enduring substance: I tell you assurance, it will answer all crosses with this, *Christ is mine*, when they are afflicted, assurance will lift up its face and cry out, *Christ is mine*; and when they are reproached, they will comfort themselves with this, *Christ is mine*, I can put on the Lord Jesus.

Fourthly, Assurance will keep you from Apostacy, and defection from Christ, 2 Pet. 1. 10. *Make your calling and election sure, and if ye do this (saith he) ye shall never fall*; Heb. 3. 11, 12. Is there set down as a fault of the evil heart of misbelief, it maketh us depart from the living God; but on the contrary, assurance knitteth the soul to Christ by a threefold cord, which is not easily broken. Believe it, the assured Christian can cry out with much confidence of Faith, *My mountain standeth strong, I shall never be moved*, the assured Christian can cry out with much cheerfulness, *In God will I praise his word, in God have I put my trust, I will not be afraid what the Lord can do unto me*; yea, he can sweetly sing in the very mouth of danger, *The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?* Psal. 27. 1.

Fifthly, Assurance keepeth all the graces of the Spirit green and flourishing, it is as a refreshing dew upon our branches, which maketh every grace sweetly to blossom in his season. 1. It stirreth up the exercise of love: O how vigorous are the actings of love, when a Christian can cry out, *My beloved is mine, and I am his*, Song 1. 13. *My beloved: there is her assurance, He is a bundle of myrrhe and shall ly all night between my breasts*; that is, as long as time shall last, I shall never have Christ out of my heart, there is love, 1 John 4. 19. *We loved Him, because he loved us first*, our hearts are naturally cold, but love kindleth love; the sence of his love to us, putteth our heart unto a heavenly flame towards him again. 2. Assurance keeps up the exercise of prayer, it is the assured Christian that can pray best, and to best advantage; and in these three things especially

especially is prayer helped by assurance: 1. It helpeth in the point of boldness. O but the assured Christian can go boldly to the throne of grace, crying, *Altho Father, and my Lord and my God.* 2. It helpeth our diligence in Prayer, Psal. 63. 1. *O my God, here is Assurance, early will I seek thee,* there is his diligence as the fruit thereof. 3. It helpeth the fervency of prayer, as in that same place, *My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh languisheth for thee,* there is fervency as another fruit of his Assurance. 4. Assurance keepeth in exercise, and life the grace of mortification, as is clear; by comparing 2 Cor. 4. verse last, with 2 Cor. 5. 1. *We look not after the things that are seen:* O Paul what aileth you, may ye not take a look of the world? O saith Paul, and would you know the ground of it, *We know if this house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a house not made with hands eternall in the Heavens;* my house and my treasure is in heaven, I must have my heart there and mine eyes also; would you know what would stay your pursuit after the world, study to have the Assurance of your Interest in Christ continually with you. And 5. It keepeth in exercise the grace of humility: there is nothing will keep Christians so humble as assurance, Gal. 2. 20. *I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,* Eph. 3. 8. *there be is all in exalting grace, and debasing himself.* It is the misbeliever and discouraged person, that dwelleth nearest pride; believe it, misbelief is big with child of pride and apostacy, these are the two children which that fruitfull mother will bring forth. And 6. It will help the grace of repentance: would you know what would make the Christian to repent, it is even this, to take Christ in our arms and call him ours, Zech. 12. 10. *They shall look upon him, that is their Faith, and they shall mourn as one mourneth for his only Son,* I think it is known by experience, the soul never weeps more tenderly under the conviction of sin, than when he hath Christ in his arms, & can say, *He is mine:* O how sweetly do they then complain? there is not a sight of Christ as their own, when they have offended, but it breaks

their heart in pieces, and it is as a sword piercing the bones, when they cry out, O what a fool I to offend such a precious One, in whom I had so much interest? was it not sense of interest that made Mary wash the feet of Christ with her tears? Last, it will keep in exercise the grace of joy, 1 Pet. 8. It is Faith which maketh one to *rejoyce with joy unspeakable and full of glory*; Would ye know why your faces are withered? Would ye know why all the pleasant plants of God within your soul are decayed? Is this, ye live without sight of your interest in Christ; believe it (if so I may speak) Assurance will be a watering to your graces every morning, and refresh them every hour, it being a channel through which divine influence is conveyed to the increase of grace, and especially of joy.

The sixth advantage that cometh into the Christian, by assurance of his interest in Christ is, That it maketh death exceeding pleasant, and comfortable to the soul: What maketh death *the King of terrors*, and what maketh it so to us? Is it not this we go to heaven under a cloud? the assured Christian can take death in his arms, and cry out, welcome, O friend: The assured Christian when he seeth the Chariots his Father sends for him, doth with old Jacob rejoyce; and Psal. 23. *When I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil*. What brought you that length, David? I tell you why saith he, *for God is with me*, verse. 4: I think I need not fear any thing, when I have God in my company; It is the assured Christian that can cry out, *Why should I fear death*? Should I not laugh at destruction? I think indeed, the assured Christian needeth not fear death, because death to him is the death of all his lusts, the funeral of all his sorrows; and is not the day of death his Coronation day, his marriage day, the day of his triumph, and of his entering into rest, and why then should he fear it? The seventh advantage is, that a Christian

a Christian being in the state of Assurance, can put the highest account upon the smallest mercy that he meeteth with from God: the assured Christian looketh upon every mercy as a wonder, it is the assured Christian that cryeth out *I am less than the least of all thy mercies*; there is not a mercy he meeteth with, were it but a drop of cold water, but if he can read this on it, that it came from my Husband, and from my Father, it will be better to him than the sweetest wine.

Lastly: Assurance doth exceedingly help us to cheerfulness in obedience: O that is a remarkable connexion that Paul hath, Acts. 27. 23. *The Lord, whose I am, and whom I serve*; that passage also, 2 Cor. 5. 14. is very observable. *The love of Christ constraineth us*, &c. Why art thou so painfull a Minister Paul? why knowest thou no man after the flesh, art not led by carnal interests nor affections: art so busie and diligent, as all the world counteth thee mad? Why? (saith he) love will not let me rest, if I would be lazy, or carnal, or fold my hands to sleep; the love of Christ doth always sound that in my ears, that I was dead and he hath died for me, that henceforth I should not live unto my self, but unto him that died for me: Now to him who is the First and the Last, who was dead, and is alive for evermore, we give praise.

F I N I S.



